DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 424 904 PS 026 632

TITLE	Bernard van Leer Foundation Newsletter, 1996.
INSTITUTION	Bernard Van Leer Foundation, The Hague (Netherlands).
ISSN	ISSN-0921-5840
PUB DATE	1996-00-00
NOTE	97p.
AVAILABLE FROM	Bernard van Leer Foundation, P.O. Box 82334, 2508 EH, The Hague, Netherlands.
PUB TYPE	Collected Works - Serials (022) -- Reports - Descriptive (141)
JOURNAL CIT	Bernard van Leer Foundation, Newsletter; n81-84 Jan-Oct 1996
EDRS PRICE	MF01/PC04 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS	*Child Development; *Child Welfare; *Childrens Rights; *Early Childhood Education; Early Parenthood; Foreign Countries; *Multicultural Education; Newsletters; Program Descriptions; Violence
IDENTIFIERS	Bernard van Leer Foundation (Netherlands)

ABSTRACT

This document consists of the four issues of the Bernard van Leer Foundation's "Newsletter" published during 1996. The newsletter covers topics related to, or about efforts to foster, the education and welfare of children around the world, and includes descriptions of programs around the world, lists of resources and publications, and early childhood news. The feature articles address such topics as: (1) the place of multicultural work in early childhood education; (2) the environment of the child; (3) the rights of young children; and (4) the effects of violence on children. (BC)

****
* Reproductions supplied by EDRS are the best that can be made *
* from the original document. *
****

ED 424 904

U.S. DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION
Office of Educational Research and Improvement
EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)
☒ This document has been reproduced as received from the person or organization originating it.
☐ Minor changes have been made to improve reproduction quality.
● Points of view or opinions stated in this document do not necessarily represent official OERI position or policy.

PERMISSION TO REPRODUCE AND DISSEMINATE THIS MATERIAL HAS BEEN GRANTED BY
R.N. Cohen
TO THE EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES INFORMATION CENTER (ERIC)

Bernard van Leer Foundation
Newsletter
Number 81 January 1996

Multicultural matters

Should babies be carried on the back from where they have a good view of the world that they are growing and operating in – or facing their carers so they can bond and be stimulated? Should young children work from secure homes and have their socialisation coordinated and controlled – or wander freely and safely around their communities? Should there be a happy dependency on just one or two family carers – or confidence and well-being with several from family and community?

Questions like these reflect some of the less contentious multicultural matters in early childhood: although each raises important points about child development, within their context none is open to serious objective challenge. So, in these areas at least, it should be possible for people to accept and respect the fact that different groups have their own practices, which make sense to them and which they want to adhere to.

below: immersion in the language, music, dance and art of their cultural or ethnic group is part of the work of establishing children's sense of belonging.
New Zealand, Anau Ako Pasifika *project*

However, it sometimes seems difficult for members of distinct cultural groups to accept the ideas, attitudes and behaviour of other groups, sometimes because they feel certain about their own values and practices, express that certainty and allow it to shape their attitudes and behaviour. But how certain can anyone be that they are right – especially when coping with the infinitely complex business of supporting children as they grow through the first vital years?

Scientific theory versus traditional practices?

For example, from Europe and North America come books that tell parents how to plan, implement and judge child-raising. These books will often be based on current child development theory and for many reasons will appeal to members of the cultural group they are aimed at[1] – they may even help to delineate the group itself.[2] Further, because they affect both attitudes and behaviour, they can also contribute decisively to the establishment of certainties on which judgemental attitudes are established: readers may believe that they now know the right way, therefore anything else is suspect.

In opposition to this, other equally strong cultural groups are also certain about ideas and practices that have evolved over generations, that reflect deeply held beliefs and that are rooted in their own day to day realities.

These two positions may be rather stereotyped but they serve to show that, when there are differences between cultural groups, neither side has a wholly

In this issue:

Multicultural matters - the place of early childhood development in multicultural work. Contributions from **Peru** Back from the margins *(pages 2-3)*, **Botswana** Acculturation and preparation for school *(pages 6-7)*, **United Kingdom** Inner-city multicultural work *(pages 7-8)*, **India** Changing teachers *(page 9)*.

Europe: Preventing conflicts *(pages 10-11)*, **New Zeland** Recognising prior learning (page 11), **the Netherlands** This is me *(pages 12-13)*

Network news *pages 14-15*

Reports from the field
El Salvador A special journey *page 14*, Creating a new space for life *pages 16-17*

How the poor experience structural adjustment *pages 18-20*

Educational Oases *pages 21-22*

New publication: *A guide to promoting resilience in children page 22*

Resources *page 23*

New trustee *page 24*

PS 026632

defensible position: isn't overdependence on book learning as questionable as over immersion in customs, norms and practices? Should today's theories weaken the importance of received wisdom? Are traditions adequate on their own in a fast changing world?

Culture and ethnicity

The two positions also hint at a major difficulty in discussing multicultural matters: that there is a great deal of confusion between the concept of culture and the concept of ethnicity. Only broad working definitions are possible in this article, but we take 'culture' to mean any collection of shared beliefs, attitudes and practices that binds a group together at any given time irrespective of ethnic origins.[2] 'Ethnicity' is also a concept that is applied to a group of people. However, an ethnic group is likely to be characterised by some historical continuity, by members having common forebears, and by members exhibiting common beliefs and patterns of behaviour over some generations.[3]

But do we always need to be clear about when we mean cultural and when we mean ethnic... or can we often successfully and safely operate without such clarity? Judging by several of the accompanying articles, it seems that many people working in the field take a pragmatic view, sometimes using the concepts interchangeably. Such a view may be debatable but it does allow effective multicultural early childhood work in the polyethnic and multicultural societies that most of us live and work in.

Cultural marginalisation

One issue is very prominent in many areas where the Foundation supports projects: a disregard for – sometimes a suppression of – the values and beliefs of minority cultures by a dominant group. In her article from Peru (see below), Tarcila Rivera Zea remembers the impact on her childhood of being a member of an indigenous culture when her country was less sensitive to such issues:

> First and foremost, I am Quechua born and bred and speak Quechua. However, years ago when I entered primary school, I discovered that the educational system was wholly in Spanish with nothing in it that came from our culture. Primary school was therefore a trauma for me and my fellows; also, we were seen as retarded because we could not understand the lessons or the materials. This hit at our spirit, our self esteem and our sense of security. People thought we were stupid, and very docile and humble. The system did this to us.

As well as this kind of direct impact on a growing child, changes in the roles of family members – especially those of mothers – caused by cultural marginalisation can be extremely important. Nancy Motta draws out the key importance of women's roles in a group that she studied in Colombia:

> Women in this black culture play a determining role in the social structure of the Pacific Coastal region... In addition, the woman guards and transmits the beliefs of the ethnic traditions, is the ideological carrier and the cultural messenger.[5]

Some idea of what can go wrong because of changes in roles that are imposed by marginalisation is offered in some long term work from the Philippines:

> The health of Agta women is deteriorating as a result of liquor, stressful interactions, loss of social status, lowered self image, and diminishing faith in Agta culture... Gestation, childbirth and childrearing are

Peru: back from the margins

This article is taken from an interview with Tarcila Rivera Zea, Director of the CHIRAPAQ *centre of Indian Cultures, Ayacucho, Peru.* CHIRAPAQ *was established to help bring about a more balanced meeting of indigenous and dominant cultures in Peru by seeking validation and acceptance of traditional cultures.*

One of CHIRAPAQ*'s approaches involves working closely with young children and their mothers – the main transmitters of cultural values and practices – to give children confidence in their own identity as they come into contact with other cultures.*

First and foremost, I am Quechua born and bred and speak Quechua. However, years ago when I entered primary school, I discovered that the educational system was wholly in Spanish with nothing in it that came from our culture. Primary school was therefore a trauma for me and my fellows; also, we were seen as retarded because we could not understand the lessons or the materials. This hit at our spirit, our self-esteem and our sense of security. People thought we were stupid, and very docile and humble. The system did this to us.

Peru today is a multicultural society that includes more than 60 indigenous cultures from before the *Conquistadores* (conquerors from Europe). Our objective in CHIRAPAQ is to make sure that the cultures that still exist are revalidated and recognised when people talk about 'Peruvians'. We aren't trying to re-establish static cultures but something that lives and adapts in a multicultural society and in a changing world. However there is one key element in our culture that must be preserved: our oral tradition and its content. At the moment it is being lost or swamped by foreign ones.

Our way forward now is to build bridges into the mainstream of Peruvian life so that our children can enjoy better conditions than those that we have suffered. We don't want them to live in poor conditions, lacking sufficient food or shoes to wear. And we don't want them to live apart in some kind of ghetto. Our aim is that they have easy contact with the outside world but that they feel more secure about it because our culture is valued.

We also want our language to be valued as Spanish or English is valued – not all over the world but here where we live.

> difficult and are becoming more so. While work loads have increased… pregnancy problems appear to be increasing as a result of inadequate protein in the diet, less variation in forest-procured plant foods and generally poorer health.

Consequences for young children

Loss of self-esteem, economic disadvantage, unfavourable positions in society and a substantial reduction in women's significance: given these kinds of effects on primary caregivers, it is logical to worry about the consequences for young children's development environments. Formerly these environments would have been determined by well established practices and norms; now these are disrupted or lost and have to be reconstructed or reinvented. And, in both practical and cultural terms, in much less appropriate circumstances by people who are probably less able than before.

This is still more worrying when we remember that young children form and react to attitudes and behaviour from as early as three years, picking up their ideas from many sources including family and community members, and books and the media generally. Children may therefore form poor self-images linked to who they are perceived to be, culturally or ethnically; and may also develop clear images about who or what they perceive others to be.

The potential for conflict

No discussion of multicultural matters could ignore the real potential for conflict between people of different ethnicities or cultures. A quick glance at the state of the world at the moment will show that conflicts are all too common. These range from the relatively minor – for example, a disinclination to mix with people from another culture – to the massive and disastrous – for example, the kind that has recently ripped through Rwanda. And the implications for early childhood development of any kind of conflict are equally clear (for an exploration of this see *Newsletter* 67).

Yet most of us do live in multicultural societies. In which case an apparently reasonable conclusion emerges – as Carmen Treppte puts it:

> If multicultural society is a political fact which we have to face whether we like it or not, strategies are needed to enable its members to come to an understanding with each other, regardless of their ethnic, national or religious background.

Some such strategies are already well known while others are emerging and are being developed. They are based on some straightforward principles which include:

right: traditional ways of learning from older community members. Peru. National Non-formal Education programme

However, we don't have any ambition to manipulate people from other cultures, we just want to have the confidence to develop our own abilities in our own ways, in an environment that accepts us.

Children: a new beginning

We have to give children the confidence to operate successfully in the world if we want our culture to prosper. That means re-establishing the whole Quechua child. One starting point is dealing with malnutrition among our children. There is a culturally appropriate way of dealing with this: reverting to our traditional agricultural products – they are very good for small children. We also have to make sure that children become naturally motivated learners by preparing them to operate well in the formal educational system. We can do this partly by making them confident in their culture.

A special problem that we have is the aftermath of the recent conflict* in Peru: children now have to come to terms with terrible experiences of violence. We work at this by encouraging them to express themselves through drawings, paintings and clay modelling. But, as we help them to recuperate psycho-socially, we don't use psychologists, we rely on our own resources and naturally occurring ones too. The materials are natural: clay and colours from the earth and plants, and we use the expertise that community members have, especially older adults.

These approaches have worked and we now have sixteen year olds who have recuperated from their experiences and who are acting as teachers of younger children.

Confrontation happens when indigenous children meet other cultures. Both sides have to remove the problem by accepting that we are all Peruvians – the blacks, the Chinese, the indigenous, those of European descent – and that we all have the same right to respect from each other, the same duty to respect each other. This means eradicating the idea that indigenous people are inferior.

We must also build up our own self confidence and make sure that we are equipped to face the other elements in society. For example, we have to be literate and we have to be able to use modern technology otherwise we may be left behind.

* *Peru has just emerged from a period of intense internal conflict that claimed the lives of many thousands of people and resulted in the destruction of many communities.*

- an acceptance of the right to express, live and grow in one's distinct ethnicity and culture;
- a respect for diversity;
- a recognition of interdependence;
- a recognition that ignorance breeds fear.

To these can be added statements of principle, such as this one from New Zealand:

> In a truly democratic society, no particular group should be systematically excluded from the decision-making process, either directly or indirectly… Future generations of Maori (should) be able to live in a world where to be different is not to be inferior, where they can contribute creatively to nation building, where people complement each other because of their unique gifts, talents, insights and values.[8]

below: ECD activities in multicultural work should be fun, stimulating and thought-provoking. Classroom action based on the Anne Frank Centre's resource pack Dit Ben Ik

What to do in ECD?

When planning programmes for work with young children, parents, communities and so on, one broad approach is to ensure that cultural diversity is incorporated as a key element. The authors of *Educating young children in a diverse society* describe it as '… the infusion of multicultural awareness into the learning environment of young children. This does not mean the occasional addition of an ethnic or gender-neutral activity or lesson, but the continual, ongoing inclusion of the pluralistic nature of (a) society in all aspects of the curriculum'.[9]

Working around this idea, models for interventions have been established. While there are no magic wands, such models generally set out to develop positive attitudes in young children towards cultural variety. They include elements for positively influencing ethnic/cultural relationships, such as:

- multicultural staff working with multicultural groups of children;
- encouraging mutual understandings, solidarity and respect between children from different cultures;
- pride in self and culture;
- fun activities especially in discovering each others' culture;
- in-built anti-racist policies;
- parental involvement in preventing the development of prejudice and discrimination in children; and
- staff sensitivity to their own and each other's ethnicity.[10]

The Foundation's approach

These and complementary considerations drawn out below guide the Foundation in supporting work with young children, their families and their communities that leads towards greater understanding and respect between cultural and ethnic groups.

Much of this is with pre-school children, their principle carers and community members. One example is the work of the Family Service Unit in an English disadvantaged inner-city area marked by its polyethnicity and multiculturalism. As the article on page 7 makes clear, such work is characterised by careful exploration of the realities that are being confronted; and by constant attention to the practical implications of the approaches that are used. Key issues that have arisen include ensuring mutual acceptance of, and respect for, the working styles and practices of members of multicultural staff who are drawn from their own communities.

However, effective pre-school work can be lost as children enter the formal school system – indeed children may even find themselves disadvantaged by their confidence in their culture or ethnicity. This raises the question of adequate teacher training. A strong line is taken by Dr Ravikala Kamath from India (see page 9). She believes that trainee teachers must be immersed in the realities of multiculturalism so that they accept the challenges of the prejudices and stereotypes that they carry with them.

But even the best trained teachers need well conceived and thoroughly developed resources with which to work – this is not a field that can safely be left only to improvisation. In the Netherlands, the Anne Frank Centre has recently published its resource pack for primary school work *Dit ben Ik* ('This is me'). The pack was developed by a multicultural team working in multicultural communities, and is designed to enable children to explore cultural and ethnic differences whilst being guided by teachers and parents. The aim is inclusive attitudes that respect and value differences (see page 12). Meanwhile, in the United States the Committee for Boston Public Housing in Boston has developed an anti-bias curriculum and an associated training pack for teachers (see *Newsletter 65*). Support for anti-bias work is also offered in *Anti-bias curriculum: tools for empowering young children*,[11] which was reviewed in *Newsletter 76*.

Parallel with such work are initiatives to re-establish and revalidate cultures that are in danger of being overwhelmed. These include the work of the *Intelyape-Lyape Akaltye* project of the Institute of Aboriginal Development in Australia (see *Newsletter 72*) and that of the Denver Indian Circle in the United States (see *Newsletter 69*).

The utmost good will, but...

Given the complexity of the situations in which multicultural work takes place, it is not surprising that unpredictable problems arise: even when people work with the utmost good will and apply all the right attitudes and approaches to their work, total success cannot be guaranteed. Evaluation is therefore vital.

The Kuru Development Trust has recently published its own incisive survey of the results of a programme that it has operated to combat high primary school dropout rates among Basarwa children in Botswana as they went through processes of acculturation. While meeting its original objectives, the programme also uncovered unexpected attitudes and reactions among and between teachers and parents. The evaluation shows that some apparently self evident assumptions can turn out to be anything but. In line with its clinically honest approach, the survey draws some hard conclusions and adds a set of clear recommendations both for its own work and for that of other agencies involved. (see page 6)

ECD programmes in the wider picture

However, given the nature of multicultural problems and their inherent complexities, direct work with young children and their families and communities has to take its place alongside much bigger efforts. And such efforts are being made: for example, the work of the various agencies of the United Nations is well known.

Additional, and more detailed work is also going on – particularly in the prevention of conflict. An idea of the complexity of such work, and of its delicacy can be gained from the article on the work of the High Commissioner on National Minorities whose brief covers Europe. As well as encouraging and enabling dialogue between different groups about any and all situations and issues that have potential for conflict, the High Commissioner analyses national laws and international treaties drawing out best practice in order to influence others. (see page 11)

Again at the global level, there are examples of the media making very significant moves to both develop multicultural approaches to their programmes and ensure that such programmes can be produced by the right people – members of cultural or ethnic groups. One such example is that of the work of the world famous children's television programme Sesame Street. This is now seen in over 50 countries… but the version seen in the USA may be quite different from that shown in South Africa. This is because the programme is often produced for specific cultural or ethnic audiences in collaboration with members of those cultural or ethnic groups.

This means joint determination of content, cultural setting, language and so on. There are even specially made, locally appropriate puppets. A very strong commitment to local capacity building complements this. It may be on the spot by experts from the production company's New York base or through 'fellowships' in which core skills such as multimedia educational programming for children are shared. The Foundation is now supporting a project aimed at producing Sesame Street in Arabic and Hebrew to promote mutual understanding and tolerance among Palestinian and Jewish children inside Israel and the West Bank and Gaza.

Meanwhile at national level, governments such as that of Colombia recognise that they act for a multi-ethnic nation with many distinct cultures. Therefore, local indigenous languages are accepted as official languages in the areas in which they are spoken; and education responds to the interests and needs of communities, to their culture and to their language.[12] While there are logical limits to the number of languages that a system can sustain, an approach like this accepts diversity and thereby encourages the development of a national identity that is enriched by its ethnic and cultural nature.

Conclusions

Addressing multicultural matters calls for wide and detailed work. Some of this must be at high level – for example, between governments and at national levels. There is also much work that can be done at more local levels – for example, within communities. And, given that children form attitudes early, there is much valuable work to be done within early childhood development programmes. ❑

References and notes

* Single copies of back numbers of *Newsletter* are available from the Communications Section of the Foundation.

1. Parents with the opportunity and desire to reinforce their capacities by equipping themselves with up to date, informed guidance.

2. See Epstein A L (1978), *Ethos and Identity: three studies in ethnicity*, London UK, Tavistock Publications, ISBN 0-422-76470-5

3. To offer a succinct definition of culture is to invite a complex argument: reading the extensive literature shows there are several not wholly compatible definitions of the concept.

4. Source references used here are all 'western' for want of accessible sources from elsewhere. They include Barth F (1969) *Ethnic Groups and their boundaries*, Universitet Forlaget, Bergen, Norway; Epstein, *op cit*; and Cohen A (1974), *Two-dimensional man*, Routledge and Kegan Paul, London UK, ISBN 0-7100 7783-9

5. Motta, N, *Identidad etnica, genero y familia en la cultura negra del pacifico colombiano* (Ethnic, racial and family identity in the black culture of the Pacific region of Colombia), in *Enfoques* March 1993, Universidad de Caldas, Colombia, ISSN 0121-2141

6. Stavenhagen R (1994 – drawing on Griffin 1984), *Double jeopardy: the children of ethnic minorities*, Innocenti Occasional Papers Child Rights series No 10, UNICEF, ISSN 1014-7837

7. Treppte C (1993), *Multicultural approaches in education: a German approach*, Occasional paper No 11, Bernard van Leer Foundation, The Hague, the Netherlands, ISSN 0925-2983

8. Benton N, *et al* (1993), *Kia Tāmau te Mātauranga: a report on the recognition of prior learning within the Kōhanga Reo*, New Zealand Council for Educational Research, Wellington, New Zealand

9. From King E W, Chipman M, and Cruz Janzen M (1994), *Educating young children in a diverse society*, Allyn and Bacon, Needham Heights USA, ISBN 0-205-14789-5

10. Vedder P, Bouwer E, and Pels T (1994) *Multicultural Child Care*, Centre of Intercultural Pedagogics, Leiden University, Leiden, The Netherlands (see *Newsletter 79*)

11. Derman-Sparks L, and the A.B.C. Task Force, *Anti-bias curriculum tools for empowering young children*, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Washington DC, ISBN 0-935989-20-X

12. Tamayo J A (1994), *Educacion indigena y organisacion social: el caso de tres grupos etnicos colombianos* (Ethnic education and social organisation: three ethnic Colombian groups) in *Educacion de adultos y desarrollo* No. 42, Associacion Alemana para Educacion de Adultos, Germany.

Multicultural matters

Botswana: acculturation and preparation for school

This article has been prepared from *The challenges of change: a survey on the effects of pre-school on Basarwa primary school children in the Ghanzi district of Botswana* which was published in 1995 by the Bokamoso Pre-school Programme of the Kuru Development Trust, Ghanzi, Botswana. It is about programmes of pre-school work that were developed as a way of helping Basarwa[1] children integrate into Botswana's formal education system at a time when the Basarwa were losing their traditional habitats and being forced into a settled and marginalised existence.

The challenges of change is an exceptional publication for a number of reasons. First, because it is a remorselessly critical piece of self analysis: the people who participated in its production – and in the production of the survey on which it is based – were dedicated enough to their work to want to examine it critically and honestly; to identify mistakes; and to reflect on the lessons that could be found.

The second reason for its importance is that the survey was devised and carried out with the intention of showing a living picture of what was really happening. This was done by talking to the right people, opening up real dialogues and fora for discussion, and recording fully what they had to say.

A third reason is that there is no hint of sentimentality: no romantic vision of any particular culture intrudes, no one is locked into the past and no one takes one side or the other. This is something that has been produced by people who find themselves in the middle of a cultural minefield and know that the only way of getting out is to ensure that everyone wants to help to produce the right maps.

There are valuable lessons in this overall approach for work in parallel situations elsewhere in the world – and many of the specific lessons that emerge will provide valuable discussion points in other cultural settings.

For many centuries the Basarwa people of Botswana largely had the Kalahari desert to themselves and as recently as ten years ago they were still hunter-gatherers. This made them experts in survival techniques in a bleak environment. However, for some time now they have been living with several other language groups and therefore undergoing a process of acculturation – moving closer to other peoples, thereby losing some of their cultural characteristics while acquiring new ones. In addition, most of the other groups are more powerful socially and materially than they are.

The lands they once inhabited have been divided up into farms and wildlife areas and now are too intensively used to yield a living. As a result, the Basarwa mostly live in government settlements or work or squat on private farms where they find that their knowledge is no longer useful. They have few material possessions.

How children used to learn

Quoting extensively from Heinz and Lee,[2] the survey notes that learning opportunities for the children were once characterised by both emotional security and a freedom of interaction between them and the adults. For example, children would have learned by listening at night by the fire when the Basarwa had their most pronounced interactions; and again during the day as they took part in different duties. Peer pressure and group ridicule would have controlled any behaviour that might have been out of line, and a number of age related taboos restricted what they could do and taught them discipline.

Observations from Shostak[3] fill out the picture by adding that children would have played many imitation games based on what they observed. They would have played freely, inventively and energetically and this would have replaced most formal teaching as they acquired many of the skills that would have made them productive adults.

Acculturation and education

It is therefore understandable that, with all the sudden changes of acculturation they are undergoing, children and their education will be one of the most affected sections of modern Basarwa society. Perhaps predictably, as the children began entering the formal education system, many of them dropped out or attended irregularly. Meanwhile teachers complained that it was impossible to cover the necessary learning materials in the time available because the children did not speak Setswana (the language of the schools); that the children were unruly, undisciplined and ill equipped to attend school; and that they had many socio-cultural problems.

To counter this, the Kuru Development Trust started a pre-school programme based on the assumption that children who attended pre-school would be more likely to stay in primary school. The Trust anticipated that parents would participate more positively in the education process. A key element was the introduction of two necessary languages (Setswana and English) to the children.

Cross cultural difficulties

Albeit with scanty data, the survey shows that the programme has been successful in its original objective: dropout rates are indeed lower. However, the survey also provides a great deal of information on the cross cultural difficulties which teachers, parents and children are now experiencing. These can best be understood by sampling a few verbatim quotes; for example, from the teachers.

> 'Parents drink too much. Alcohol abuse has the effect that parents do not take up their responsibilities towards the school.'
>
> 'Jealousy and tribal conflict make all effort at educating children worthless.'

> 'They do not drop out because they do not like school. They just do not want to be left behind when their parents move.'

Meanwhile, the parents have their own views.

> 'We do not attend PTA meetings because we do not want to be scolded like children by the teachers. They do not want to hear what we say, they just want to tell us what to do.'

> 'Why is it necessary to beat my child at primary school? He had finished pre-school and was not beaten there.' (Here it's necessary to remember that beating has no part in the Basarwa culture).

> 'The children who go to school are not better off. They no longer respect their parents, they cannot work for us and also they do not find work elsewhere.'

Drawing the lessons

The survey contains many reports of group discussions that bring out further points. It then develops them into a cohesive set of six closely argued conclusions. In summary, these include:

- the effects of the language gap on the disciplinary system in the schools is still one of the main reasons why children leave school.
- Corporal punishment, as administered by teachers in their desperation, and seen by the parents and children, is the single most direct reason for children leaving school.
- It might be that one of the original aims of the pre-schools – to prepare children for primary school – has had the effect of putting primary schools under pressure to change.
- Parents have given up trying to communicate because they experience a wide gap of understanding – this is disempowering and weakens them as parents.
- Education touches the heart of a culture so, as the people are going through vast and overpowering processes of cultural transition, it is natural that the effects will spill over into schools.

Pointing the way ahead

The survey concludes with 13 specific recommendations which can be grouped together according to the issues that they deal with. For example, the largest group is about **intercultural understanding and mutual respect.** Bringing this about between teachers and parents involves working with both sides via such tools as anti-bias work and cultural workshops. Teachers are also directed to learn more about Basarwa educational practices and find ways of incorporating them into the primary school curriculum. For their part, parents must be helped to understand the roles they can play in supporting their children's progress.

A second group is concerned with **poor communication**, and highlights problems caused by language given that Botswana's official policy is against mother tongue teaching. The survey recommends that translators be provided for the first years of primary school; that teachers develop a greater understanding of 'click' languages; and that the effects of language problems on attainment/passing to next standard are untangled.

In general, as the survey concludes, there is a wide gap in understanding between parents and teachers due to lack of cultural knowledge of the other party. ❑

Notes

1. The peoples at the centre of this study are mostly known as San or Bushmen but they have no agreed inclusive name for themselves. The authors chose to use the name Basarwa in line with a resolution adopted at a conference for San peoples in Gaborone, Botswana, in October 1993.
2. Heinz H J and Lee M. (1978) *Namkwa, life among the bushman*. Anchor Press, London UK
3. Shostak M. (1981) *Nisa, the life and words of a !Kung woman*. Harvard University Press, USA

Multicultural matters

United Kingdom: inner city multicultural work

Caroline Leahy

Caroline Leahy is Unit Manager of the East Birmingham Family Service Unit, Birmingham, England. In this article she describes how the Unit approaches the complexities and subtleties of multicultural work with families, young children and community members in an area of very mixed populations. It shows how much multicultural work is actually about trying to redress great imbalances and goes on to discuss some of the very real problems that can arise for workers who work interculturally.

East Birmingham Family Service Unit is part of a national network. It is based in the Small Heath area of Birmingham, a very deprived inner city area with poor housing conditions and high levels of people receiving state benefits. The immediate area surrounding the Unit comprises about 70 per cent of people from ethnic minority groups, including those from African, Caribbean, and Asian – largely Pakistan and Bangladesh – backgrounds.

The Unit provides a range of services aimed at working against poverty and discrimination and keeping families together. These include running advice sessions and women's groups; providing intensive support to lone Bangladeshi and Pakistani women with young children; providing a social work service in preventive and child protection situations; and offering day care and playgroup services to under fives. Services are used by all sections of the community.

The staff are multicultural and closely reflect our user group – many are of South Asian origin and speak the relevant languages.

Why work with young children?

It is well accepted that the pre-school phase of development is a vital time for the growth and formation of identity and ideas. Equally, it is vital to work with families according to their actual needs rather than what professionals perceive these to be. Young children need to learn value differences at an early age. Multicultural day care plays an important role in this: children learn about festivals, dress, food, etc and that all are valid and important.

Very importantly, black children need to learn to value their own culture in order to develop a sense of pride and self-esteem that will help them to resist

above: family photos help children understand about their families, about their roots and about changes over time.

From Us and the Kids, *a multicultural pack of ideas and resources for groups of parents to learn from and support each other. Produced by Development Education Centre (DEC) in association with The Community Education Development Centre. Published by DEC, 998 Bristol Road, Birmingham B29 6LE, UK.*

and deal with the damaging effects of the racism they will certainly encounter as they grow up in British society. Children only exposed to white staff, the English language, and white biased play materials grow up damaged by the belief that white culture is preferable, and that their own is less valued.

Within the Unit's Children's Centre, pre-school children from Asian backgrounds see that the Coordinator and other staff are also Asian, speak the same or a similar language and dress in a similar way to their parents. The play materials used depict multicultural groups, for example with black people as police, doctors, etc. Books, stories and songs depict black people and situations that black children are familiar with, as well as those to which white children can relate. Within art sessions, children are encouraged to draw themselves and to colour in faces appropriately. From this black children see models of successful black people and, at an early age, accept that black people can be in charge. For white children too this provides early positive models of black people to counteract the images frequently portrayed by the media.

Understanding families

Another major part of the Unit's work is to support families to enable them to care for children and to relieve the pressure that contributes to breakdown. This depends on having a range of languages spoken within the Unit and understanding a great deal about their culture, religion, values and belief systems, and to translate this into understanding. We also must take into account the experience of migration to Britain, racism suffered, family structures, work experiences and childcare practices.

Broad stereotypical ideas regarding Asian and black cultures are particularly unhelpful. We need to understand the details about the families' cultures and where they stand within them. A little knowledge can be very dangerous because it is easy to assume, for example, that Asian families have extended family networks which are supportive and that therefore a lone mother who is separated from her husband following domestic violence, will still receive a great deal of help from her family. The reality may be that the closest family to her is her husband's family and that it is alienated and hostile to her following the separation.

In this, as in every case, it is vital to understand the position she is in within its cultural context, and then provide services that are sensitive to her needs and delivered in a way that she can accept.

While working to support parents caring for their children, it is important to realise that childcare practices differ between cultural groups and that advice given from a white perspective may be quite inappropriate and unhelpful to a family from Asian or Caribbean groups.

The issues involved in managing such a service

Managing such a team, ensuring members understand each other and what is required from them is not easy. Poorly managed situations lead to a great deal of conflict which prevents the team functioning properly and delivering helpful services to families. As with groups of children, difference needs to be accepted and valued… however, this is a complex process.

Difference means not only language and culture, but may also be about working styles. When a piece of work is delivered from an Asian or African Caribbean perspective, it can be difficult to understand by someone working from a eurocentric perspective… so judgements can be made that the worker is ineffective or difficult. When communication occurs between two people, it is filtered by each according to their cultures, beliefs, values and experiences. Without acknowledging where people stand there may be exchanges of words, but no real communication because neither party understands what the other is saying.

Within a multicultural team, if there is only one member from a particular ethnic group, there is a danger of viewing that person as an expert on all issues pertaining to that group. For instance, a single Indian worker in a team may feel that they are expected to know not only all there is to know about Indian culture, but also Pakistani and Bangladeshi cultures… and that they are expected to work with families from those backgrounds.

Staff who have been born and brought up in Britain may not fully understand the perspectives of some service users of their own cultural background – for example, those who are much older than them and who migrated to Britain, perhaps from a rural area. Tremendous pressure can be placed on such workers in this sort of situation and it is important to realise that they may need specific cultural advice – practical help too, perhaps in the form of interpreters.

Younger staff also have to strike a balance between respect for their elders on the one hand and clarity about their roles and limitations on the other. Extra pressure may be brought to bear on black staff by community leaders or those who contact them at their homes or talk to their families. An expectation may also arise from community members that the worker will necessarily support them and pull strings because they are part of the same community.

Management of these situations needs to be done via supervision which acknowledges all of these situations and which seeks ways of reducing pressure. The aim is to help the team to understand the complexities and thus deliver a useful service to children and families. ┘

India: changing teachers

Dr Ravikala Kamath

Multicultural education is preparation for social differences that individuals experience in diverse and complex human encounters through a deliberate programme. It should be responsive to human conditions and dignity, individual cultural integrity and cultural pluralism. Through such education, competencies for perceiving, believing and respecting self and others can be developed.

In most avowedly democratic nations, including India, there has been at best attempts at anti-bias education and these have been expected to engender tolerance and peaceful coexistence. However, a sound multicultural focus should go beyond this to include:

- acceptance of self and others with all strengths and weaknesses,
- acceptance of others as equals irrespective of background,
- instructional materials free of bias and stereotyping,
- instructional strategies that promote self-esteem and teach specific concepts related to the universality of human needs, feeling and desires, as well as the positive aspects of diversity,
- instructors who create an ethos and environment that percolates through the educational portals to reach into homes, neighbourhoods and the community at large

What teachers must know

Behaviour and its norms are important aspects of cultural identity and therefore vary enormously between groups. Some examples of this include the amount of personal space that people need, patterns of eye contact and the types, amounts and timings of touchings. Family and kinship patterns also vary widely. For example, what counts as a family? Who is a close and who a distant relative? Important too is the role of the individual within a culture. Is the individual valued or the group? Being clear about this helps teachers make decisions about whether competition – so beloved of so many educational institutions – is culturally appropriate or not.

Religious and spiritual beliefs and practices can play important roles both within the community and in its members' interactions with the wider society. Beliefs and practices about vegetarian food and fasting, what should be worn, and when it is appropriate and possible for children to attend school: all of these raise practical issues that teachers have to be aware of and plan around.

There are also important questions about appropriate teaching styles. While it is accepted that children as individuals respond differently to different styles of teaching, the influence that culture should have is much less clear.

Some dilemmas

A common situation in many countries is that one cultural group is dominant over others and, in considering multiculturalism, two views have emerged. The first is the deficit perspective in which the dominant groups considers other groups in terms of what, compared with the ruling norms, these other groups lack and what therefore has to be overcome. The second view is the difference perspective in which no comparative value judgements are appropriate. However, although the views are clear, the dilemmas that each view raises have still to be resolved.

For example, many people sincerely believe that the second view will result in societies becoming more and more fragmented and that ethnic conflict is an inevitable consequence. As a way of countering this, they advocate strong efforts to promote a core culture and language. This is linked to the idea of assimilating members of other cultures – especially newcomers – into the dominant society.

Others take the opposite line, and believe that ethnic tensions are caused by just such efforts to force cultural unity. In their eyes, the need is for a recognition of diversity, toleration of differences and sensitivity to the legitimate concerns and values of others.

Further dilemmas arise when members of different cultures have certain beliefs and practices that cannot be accepted by others. Here, it is vital to keep in mind that cultural pluralism does not require that all values, behaviour and norms of every group be tolerated. Some cultural practices – such as sexist bias, racial discrimination, untouchability, and so on – may be intolerable for ethical or rational reasons. Thus, for trainee teachers, Human and civil rights that guarantee all human beings dignity, respect and equality, must have precedence over cultural practice.

Issues for teacher training

Training teachers to work multiculturally means accepting the challenge of the prejudices and stereotypes that they already carry with them. This means that they need to develop greater understanding, compassion and appreciation for themselves and others, and a truly holistic and altruistic outlook that encompasses not only knowledge but also attitudes, values, ethics and morality.

Teachers must respect cultural pluralism: the understanding they develop, the skills they acquire, the values they imbibe will influence not only their lives but the immediate environments and climate within their schools. To prepare them for this calls for processes of action and reflection – praxis – and these processes could include:

- exploring the community where students from different groups congregate,
- visiting and studying ethnic and cultural centres, including places of worship, eating places, museums, etc,
- encouraging the learning of other languages,
- exposing them to literature, theatre and art from other cultures,
- organising exchange visits across local cultural divides,
- arranging culturally diverse fairs,
- fostering school, community and family partnerships across cultures.

The author is a Professor and Head of the Department of Human Development (Department of Post graduate studies and research in home science), [illegible] Women's University, Bombay, India

Preventing conflicts

Konrad Huber

Before recently taking up a post in Rwanda, Konrad Huber helped to establish the Foundation on Inter-Ethnic Relations which provides support for the High Commissioner on National Minorities for the intergovernmental Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE). In this article he describes the work of the High Commissioner in forestalling conflicts between ethnic and cultural groups by bringing about discussions and negotiations, and by encouraging the development of appropriate treaties.

In the last five years we have witnessed the eruption of ethnic-based wars in the former Yugoslavia and the former Soviet Union. Wholesale slaughter and forced deportation in Bosnia even introduced a new term – 'ethnic cleansing' – into the world's lexicon of brutality. And then there has been Rwanda.

Two misconceptions have fuelled our sense of helplessness in the face of such savagery. The first is that ethnic conflicts are inevitable: age-old ethnic hatreds are supposedly the unavoidable cause of such conflicts. The second misconception is that nothing can be done to prevent them.

The work of a former Netherlands Foreign Minister, Max van der Stoel, has done much to challenge these misconceptions over the last three years. As High Commissioner on National Minorities for the intergovernmental Organisation for Security and Cooperation in Europe (OSCE), he has contributed immeasurably to preventing conflicts that could arise from ethnic tensions in Central and Eastern Europe and the former Soviet Union. Functioning 'behind the scenes', he has encouraged governments to increase legal protections for minorities, to develop an effective dialogue with minority representatives, and build good relations with minorities' so-called kin-states or 'mother-countries'.

The High Commissioner's Mandate

Van der Stoel's mandate arises from the OSCE, an intergovernmental organisation like the United Nations but with regional rather than regional membership. The OSCE currently has 54 countries as members: Canada, USA, and all of the states of Europe and the former Soviet Union. Like the UN, the OSCE is fundamentally an organisation of governments, but unlike the UN, it has focused on preventing conflict rather than resolving it.

The High Commissioner is supposed to provide 'early warning' and 'early action' in situations of ethnic tension that could develop into an armed conflict threatening peace, stability, or inter-state relations. The High Commissioner is empowered to carry out on-site visits to a country in order to analyse inter-ethnic relations and to encourage dialogue, confidence, and cooperation between government officials and minority representatives.

After a visit or two, the High Commissioner sends confidential recommendations to the country's government. These recommendations serve as the basis for his further visits there.

If tensions escalate beyond the High Commissioner's ability to contain them, he is to alert the OSCE's political bodies of an imminent crisis, and then the OSCE's members as a whole will decide the organisation's course of action to prevent the eruption of a conflict.

The High Commissioner in Action

Van der Stoel has become engaged in more than ten potential 'trouble-spots' in Europe and the former Soviet Union. These countries include, Albania, Estonia, Hungary, Kazakhstan, Kyrgyzstan, Latvia, (the former Yugoslav) Republic of Macedonia, Romania, Slovakia, and Ukraine.

They share certain characteristics that make them susceptible to political disputes over ethnic issues. The authorities are predominantly drawn from the political leaders of the ethnic majority, and the state in general tends to reflect the interests of this group. Minority representatives feel compelled to advocate for the establishment and/or extension of measures to protect and promote their group's distinct identity. Such advocacy is often perceived as threatening to the majority's control of the state, especially if the minority's kin-state is located next door or nearby. This volatile mixture could readily ignite into conflict, especially if politicians of any side decide to fan the existing tensions.

Van der Stoel has attempted to de-escalate these tensions through careful, low-profile work as a neutral yet engaged outsider, or 'third party'. Recognising that ethnic tensions are extremely volatile and often fuelled by mutual misperceptions, he has avoided assigning blame to one party or another. Nor has he acted as a formal negotiator or mediator between government officials and minority representatives on specific matters. Rather, his independent on-site assessments of a particular situation have enabled him to formulate concrete recommendations to the government on constructive yet achievable changes to its minority policy. These recommendations then form the basis for his subsequent contacts with the authorities and the minorities, contacts which are aimed at promoting greater dialogue, confidence, and cooperation.

While the bulk of the High Commissioner's work is necessarily confidential a number of modest 'success stories' can be cited. In Estonia and Latvia his recommendations have brought about improvements in policies related to citizenship and legal residence for hundreds of thousands of former Soviet citizens who were left without such guarantees after the re-establishment of independence for the Baltic states; while in the (former Yugoslav) Republic of Macedonia Van der Stoel has been encouraging possibilities for higher education in minority languages, particularly Albanian, in order to help mitigate a major source of ethnic friction in this fragile Balkan state.

The work of the High Commissioner has helped to minimise acute escalations over ethnic issues in many countries. By the same token, various innovative approaches to dealing with such issues have come to light.

New Zealand: recognising prior learning

What happens when skilled, experienced and knowledgeable people from a minority group discover that they are not qualified to progress in an education system that was established according to the needs of a dominant group? This is the central concern of *Kia Tāhuhu te Mātauranga: a report on the recognition of prior learning within the Kohanga Reo* (Maori language nests).* The report also stresses the key cultural relevance of that knowledge and expertise as people work to revalidate and revitalise their cultures and ethnic identities.

Many of the people who naturally emerge as ideal to run early childhood activities have been let down by an education system that was designed for the needs of a dominant culture. Predictably, they could not reach their full potential and certainly had little chance of gaining the kind of certification that would give them access to tertiary education. One way out of this is to find ways of recognising what people have experienced and achieved, then of assessing it and giving credit towards an appropriate course. The authors of this report highlight the concept of Recognition of Prior Learning (RPL) as a way of doing this.

Although it has its roots in the USA and England, RPL as it is discussed here is different first because people have to show that they have **learned through their experiences** and second because it is drawn from the needs of the Maori language nests.

RPL is described in terms of self-discovery, guidance and assessment. **Self discovery** means that potential learners reflect on their experiences and discover the nature and quality of what they have learned. In this they receive **guidance** from experienced facilitators. The facilitators help the learners study the processes of self-discovery while always keeping in mind that RPL is assessment [illegible] empowerment for learners.

Finally, there is **assessment** of the value of prior learning. Standards for this are set by people who have the wisdom, knowledge and experience.

But how can prior learning be given a just and appropriate value? The report tackles this contentious area by relating it to the values and beliefs of the cultural context, to the need for academic credibility and to the day to day realities of working in the Maori language nests. In practical terms, it offers [illegible] for assessing prior learning:

1 Authenticity – learners learned what they claimed [illegible]
2 [illegible] – a sharp focus to the learning
3 [illegible] – the learning was not isolated from [illegible]
4 Quality – the right balance of theory and practice
5 Transferability – skills and knowledge that can be applied outside the context in which they were learned
6 Currency – learners have kept up to date with recent developments
7 Validity – the evidence presented relates to the standards and learning outcomes claimed

To achieve a useful assessment, the report offers a seven step approach including: the need for learners to discover all prior learning that might be appropriate; helping learners to describe their learning in competency statements ('I can do...'); articulating learning that can be accredited with the goals of a course; demonstrating that learning actually happened; and measuring its degree and the level of competence achieved.

It is also necessary to ensure that standards are adequate while being consistent nationally. This is achieved by moderation – maintaining an overview based on expertise and knowledge drawn from appropriate local and national bodies.

But once learners have discovered their prior learning and have had it accredited, they then need a course which is not only useful for the jobs they hope to gain but also reflects their needs as people who have come into tertiary education from very specific educational backgrounds.

The problem then becomes that of developing and operating a course that fills the gaps in their learning and prepares them for their work. Here it is discussed in terms of the values, knowledge and skills needed in Maori language nests, and in terms of what the learners will need to know to enable them to work well. For example [illegible] Maori child development theory and practice, health, and management and administration skills. Within each of these, each learner would need to identify and opt for those elements which will fill gaps in their experiences and learning.

Overall, the report [illegible] realistic exploration of what it means to enable [illegible] people to enter and succeed in the [illegible] before taking up [illegible] work [illegible]

* *Kia Tāhuhu te Mātauranga*: [illegible] *Te Wāhanga Kaupapa Māori* [illegible] for Educational Research [illegible] New Zealand.

Effective democratic institutions and the rule of law are of course indispensable for providing minorities with legal protection. It is also clear that advisory or consultative bodies on minority issues can promote dialogue and mutual understanding. Many countries throughout Europe have now established councils, round tables, or other mechanisms for such dialogue and advice-giving on minority issues, both at the national and local levels.

At the international level, treaties on minority issues between pairs of countries have also helped to ease tensions and improve acrimonious bilateral relations. In such a treaty, a pair of countries agrees to respect the existence of their present border and to provide special benefits to the other country's co-ethnics living as a minority in their state.

While none of these approaches is a cure-all in and of itself, these strategies show that there is hope – difficult inter-ethnic relations are manageable and do not have to lead to widespread violence, ethnic conflict, or genocide.

Multicultural matters

The Netherlands: Dit Ben Ik ('This is me')

Rika Echteld and Els Schellekens

In March 1995 the Anne Frank Centre published the intercultural teaching pack *Dit Ben Ik* (This is me), for groups 1, 2 and 3 in the Dutch elementary education system – children from four to six years. It focuses on the everyday life outside school of young children from varying ethnic backgrounds. Ethnic diversity plays a steady and natural role in the texts and images. Through developing such projects the Anne Frank Centre works to achieve one of its aims: the stimulation of equality within a multi-ethnic society.

Rika Echteld and Els Schellekens were the project officers for the pack. Here they describe its philosophy, development and testing.

In 1990 *Dit Zijn Wij* (This is us) was published.* It is a teaching pack for 10-12 year old pupils in which ethnic diversity is treated as normal and valuable. At the urging of lower school teachers, the Anne Frank Centre followed the same intercultural, experience-related line in producing an equivalent pack for four to six year olds.

During the preparatory phase of the project in 1991, criteria and approaches were determined for the development of new material. These included:

- inviting pupils to share similar experiences, adventures and emotions;
- promoting self confidence and a positive self image by drawing on pupils' strong points;
- extending the behaviour of pupils by discussing varieties of behaviour and their effects;
- promoting a safe and stimulating learning environment that recognises and accepts cultural identity and multi-lingualism at school;
- promoting inclusive thinking through identification with contemporaries from different ethnic groups.

A multi-ethnic project team gave shape to these principles.

Composition of the pack

Dit Ben Ik is based on eight full-colour photo stories each of which is about a real child. They play on the curiosity that pupils have about each other's lives. Each story consists of eight photos, starting with a portrait of its leading figure and going on to tell about their true, everyday happenings.

The Knee Book Four of the photo stories have been published in a knee book, a folder that the teacher stands up on her lap. It is about 30 centimetres by 30 centimetres and she reads from the back while the pupils look at the images on the front. There is also a manual for the teacher that contains suggestions for group discussions about the themes, and for other participatory activities such as: drama and pantomime; the use of the senses; and organising theme corners. Examples of the sorts of storylines that are used include: Jeroen feels old enough to ride his bicycle alone in the street but he is not allowed to; Tin surprises his baby-sitting aunt with a little book he has drawn himself; and Mahassine is going to stay the night so takes her cuddly toy as a support.

To a dead silent class of 5 year olds, the teacher reads the photo story of a pupil called Vina. Helped by her friends, she is successfully climbing a high pole for the first time, and she glows with pride. When she gets home she tells granddad. He says 'Djago' (good) in Molukkan-Malay. After she has told the story Sharmila sighs: 'She's just like me!'

The pupils discuss doing difficult things that they would like to do and think about who could help them. Sabine would like to go down the very high slide with daddy and Gilbert thinks he might dare stroke the neighbour's poodle if she holds it for him.

Puppet Stories and Manual There are seven puppet stories contained in a manual. Three easy to make puppets talk about feelings like fear, shyness and jealousy, and about their mutual friendship and the usual small arguments that accompany such relationships. During and after the play the children in the class are helped to think about how to handle such emotions.

The manual also contains an overview of the theme which allows the teacher to quickly see whether *Dit Ben Ik* will fit into an existing project or whether it supplies material with which to introduce a topical theme.

Look and Listen Books The remaining four photo stories are used in Look and Listen books. These are produced in a smaller size (15 x 21 centimetres) and come with audio-cassettes. In a listening corner, pupils can listen to the tapes independently using headphones, or in small groups. The cassettes are bilingual – Dutch and the languages that the leading figures of the stories hear at home. For those children who understand these languages, the tapes are a delight and support, while the other children enjoy the new experience of hearing the stories in someone else's language

As with the Knee Books the storylines are real and recognisable: Rydell has to go to the hairdresser to be made beautiful for his grandmother's party; Nurdan makes clay eggs for a deserted pigeon nest, hoping that the pigeons will return and lay real eggs; Santosh makes a play boat in the garden with his sister and a couple of neighbouring children; and Tainá has two friends visiting her who are allowed to wish on her magic stone.

The Video The video *Kijk, dit ben ik* (Look, this is me) contains three 12 minute instalments about important moments from the daily life of a child: 'Waking up', 'After school' and 'Going to bed'. These were filmed in the children's homes; and viewers experience how Youssef gets up, chooses his clothes and has breakfast; what Chatera and her brother Milad do at their little club; and which rituals Sara follows when she goes to bed. Children from a number of ethnic groups talk about how these things are their own cultures, and each instalment concludes with a song or story.

Wrong-footing

In one way the prototype material sometimes had the opposite effect of that intended because ethnic/cultural characteristics that we deliberately kept low key were over emphasised by some teachers. That was partially our fault: the text to be read from the Knee Book didn't start until the second photograph and some teachers felt that they had to ask something. Unfortunately, some came up with less desirable questions such as: 'Where do you think this child comes from?' and 'Is Nurdan different from us?'. We hope we have overcome this by adding extra text by the portrait.

The development and testing of the material took two and a half years and approximately 100 people collaborated. A more detailed description of the concept and the development process was due to be published in English at the end of 1995.

Implementation

In mid-1995 the project entered its ultimate phase: implementation. Our aim is that 25 per cent of the elementary schools in The Netherlands will buy and use the teaching pack. As well as direct mailings and presentations for teachers, trainers and education counsellors, we are working at having *Dit Ben Ik* embedded into national education programmes. In the promotions we mainly stress the contribution that *Dit Ben Ik* makes to the social-emotional development of children – a topical field of interest within many schools. To do so, we use an introductory video, *Getting to work with Dit Ben Ik*, which shows how teachers work with and react to the material. We introduce the pack like this because 'intercultural' could give the impression that the material is only about intercultural issues or only interesting for schools with a large number of immigrant children.

The development process

While the content of the pack may be very interesting to people working in other situations, the processes that we went through as we developed it are probably more directly useful. We documented these as we went along and they are sketched out below.

The leading figure In the planning stage of the project, we made an overview of possible themes together with a profile of each of the eight leading figures. These were of both sexes, and from a variety of living environments and ethnic/cultural backgrounds. We then used authors and photographers from each of the ethnic groups involved because they could work from within, thus allowing us to avoid cultural distortions. Using their own network, the authors searched for possible children to star in the pack. Following discussions with children and parents, the authors wrote accurate portraits of the children. Using these, we puzzled together a variety of factually accurate story themes, characters, inter-ethnic friendships and family relations. These always incorporated the children's own words.

Collaboration Working with the author and photographer we discussed how the story line could be recorded in just eight images. At times that required considerable adaptations of the text. During the photo session the author and one of us was also present. Thus unexpected events – typical in work with young children – could be picked up and incorporated into the story. Tainá, for example, suddenly had an argument with her friends. In another case a parent playing a supporting role withdrew on the day itself but the author was able to find instant solutions.

Style, editing and authenticity To achieve some unity in style and sometimes to enhance the liveliness of the narrative, an experienced editor revised the texts, working as co-author. Subsequently parents, authors and photographers checked whether the new work was consistent with that of the story, character and perceptions of the stars.

Testing Starting in the spring of 1993, 15 teachers tried out the photo stories in four schools with different ethnic compositions, in both urban and rural settings. A few stories turned out to be too complex and had to be rewritten but the pupils really enjoyed the photographs and listened with considerable concentration. After reading from the Knee Book, the teachers asked questions to check how thoroughly children had listened carefully and whether they had understood everything.

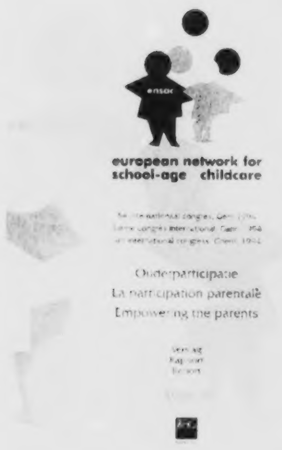
However, for us empathy and listening pleasure were more important. Therefore we included two types of questions in the manual: empathic questions, such as 'Was Vina frightened in the story? Of what? What made the fear go away?'; and questions about children's own experiences, such as 'Do you remember doing something that you have never dared to do? What was it? Did anyone help you?' Many teachers spontaneously told about their own youth and also held more personal conversations with children and their parents.

Dit Ben Ik consists of: 4 knee book stories; 4 look and listen books with audio cassettes; the video *Kijk, dit ben ik*, with 3 instalments; and a manual, also containing 7 puppet stories. All are in Dutch. The pack costs NLG145. For information contact the Information Department, Anne Frank Centre, Postbus 730, 1000 AS Amstredam, The Netherlands; Tel. +31 (0)20 55 67 100; Fax +31 (0)20 62 07 999.

---

* In 1995 an adapted version of *Dit Zijn Wij* was published in German with the title *Das Sind Wir*

Network news


european network for school-age childcare
Ouderparticipatie
La participation parentale
Empowering the parents
Verslag
Rapport
Report

Belgium: Empowering the parents

Empowering the parents is a report of the European Network for School-age Childcare's three day fifth international congress, held in Ghent in October 1994 and organised by the *Vormingscentrum voor de Begeleiding van het Jonge Kind* (VBJK – Resource and training centre for children). The congress was attended by 200 people from countries throughout Europe. Its starting point was the lack of good out of school childcare services at affordable prices. Examples of flexible forms of childcare that involve parents came from Spain, Portugal, UK and France. Another area of discussion was the need for childcare services to adapt to and reflect the multicultural societies in which they are established. The report will stimulate thinking about school age childcare and the involvement of parents; and it will be of interest to those actually working on new ways of organising school age childcare. The report is multilingual in English, French and Dutch. Further information can be obtained from: VBJK, Dunantlaan 2, 9000 Ghent, Belgium. Tel: +32 9 2646433, Fax: +32 9 2646496

France: Development of African Education meeting

In October the Biennial Plenary Meeting of the Association for the Development of African Education (DAE) met in the town of Tours. Through its activities the DAE fosters collaboration and exchange between donor agencies and Ministries of Education in Africa. The Foundation's representative at the meeting was one of over 200 participants representing 44 countries and donor agencies. The theme of this meeting was Education Policy in Sub-Saharan Africa. High on the agenda was the process of educational policy formulation, which was based on the case studies of six countries. The meeting was preceded by a meeting of the Female Participation in Education Working Group. This Working Group – which is a part of the DAE, and in which the Foundation also played a role – presented a proposal to the DAE for the creation of an Early Childhood Development Working Group. The ECD Working Group proposes to share information on viable approaches to improve the quality of child care throughout the African continent.

Netherlands: Trustees visit a play afternoon

Mrs Marjorie Benton and Mr Wilson Cross, members of the Foundation's Board of Trustees, visited a *spelmiddag* (play afternoon) in August. The play afternoons are run by the *Samenspel* (joint action) Project in Rotterdam for immigrant children and their mothers, who attend them with great enthusi-

Network news special report

El Salvador: a special journey

Two groups of *educadoras* (para-professional educators) from the Children of Street Vendors project in El Salvador visited projects in Guatemala and Nicaragua earlier this year. They came up with the idea of the trip themselves and travelled by bus. The Children of Street Vendors project works with the children of women who vend their wares on the streets and in the markets. The purposes of the visit were to share experiences and see how people in similar situations in other locations carry out their work. The Salvadorean women visited the projects' child development centres and held discussions with the *educadoras* there.

The projects that the *educadoras* visited in Guatemala were the Community Support for Urban Children project – which works in an urban area with children of rural migrants – and the *Toda Madre es Educadora* (every mother is an educator) project which works in Guatemala City with children in urban squatter areas. In Nicaragua they visited the *Los Cumiches* (the youngest ones) project that works on curriculum development and training of carers and parents. They also paid a visit to the Nicaraguan Ministry of Education.

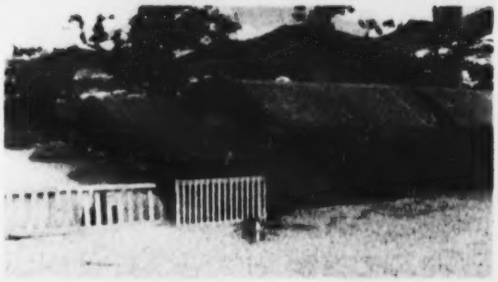
The Salvadorean *educadoras* noted many similarities between their own work and the work of the other projects. For example, the cooperation between project workers and community members in the early childhood activities, the long hours that the carers work, the good work that the volunteer mothers do, the skilful way that the workers cope with limited materials and resources.

They also highly appreciated the fact that the visits enabled them to share the bonds of friendship between themselves and other women working and living in similar circumstances. They found that this helped them to consolidate their own work and their relationships with their own companions in work. As a follow-up to the visits, they intend to run a workshop with *educadoras* from the Central American region.

asm. The Trustees participated in the afternoon activities with equal enthusiasm and interest. The afternoon passed in an informal, festive atmosphere with indoor and outdoor play, and the celebration of one of the children's birthday. The mothers were delighted that the Trustees expressed so much interest in them and their children.

Netherlands Antilles: hurricane damage

In September Hurricane Luis swept through the Windward Islands in the Caribbean causing extensive destruction. One of the worst hit islands was St. Maarten where there were many casualities and structural damage. Much of this damage was to homes and child care facilities, and efforts are now being made to arrange temporary facilities for the children. The St. Maarten NGO Children First, in cooperation with Cede St. Maarten and SIFMA – other Foundation partners in the Netherlands Antilles – has set up emergency day care in temporary accommodation such as tents for children who cannot be properly cared for because their homes have been destroyed. The situation in St. Maarten has also generated much support from the Netherlands. An example of this is the World Trade Center Amsterdam which, on the occasion of its 10th anniversary, made a substantial donation to the Children First's Emergency Day Care Programme in St. Maarten, matching a Foundation contribution. The donation was made during the World Citizenship Gala Dinner attended by over 500 people. Among them were members of the World Trade Center Amsterdam Association and their invited guests. Special guests were the Honorable George Bush, former President of the USA, and Mrs Barbara Bush. The donation was presented to Mr Maxime Larmonie, Chairman of the Board of Children First. This donation will enable Children First to continue to support those children most in need.



top right: tents which act as temporary child care facilities in hurricane damaged St. Maarten

right and far right: activities continue as usual in the tents

Poland: first step

The First Step: Pre-school Teachers Project, coordinated by the Polish Children and Youth Foundation, is the first project that the Foundation is supporting in Poland. Seeking to train a group of pre-school teacher trainers, the project is implemented by three NGOs from the towns of Lublin, Lodz and Starachowice. These NGOs are specialised in teaching-through-play methods, cooperative classroom techniques, and creative thinking. A series of workshops will be held for professionals from the NGO sector and from the statutory pre-school supervisory and in-service training institutions. The first three-day workshop of the series used different training techniques, and introduced a wide variety of creative activities such as dancing, acting, modelling, painting, and using scrap material, to show participants interesting and educational ways of interacting with children. The series of workshops will end in March 1996, after which participants will plan and implement their own pilot training courses.

Turkey: symposium

A symposium, organised by the Mother-Child Education Foundation (MCEF) and the Ministry of Education, on the Importance of Early Childhood Education Programmes was held in Istanbul on 19-20 October. It centred around the state and development of early childhood programmes in Turkey, particularly focusing on the Mother-Child Education Programme – which is run by MCEF and whose evaluation-research component is supported by the Foundation – as a home-based programme. Participants included ministerial staff, practitioners, university students, professors, NGO staff, and staff from the Directorates General of Informal Education and Pre-school Education. The symposium served to emphasise the importance and possibilities of education in the early years for all children and not only those from privileged backgrounds. Other important issues that were raised included coverage of child care services and the use of different but complementary approaches. At the end of the symposium the participants concluded that there is a need for advocating for young children; that work must fall within the Convention of the Rights of the Child; that efforts should be concentrated on reaching the most disadvantaged children; and that there is a need to plan for diverse approaches. ┘

Report from the field

El Salvador: creating a space for life

by Marisa de Martinez

The Children of Street Vendors project, run by the non-governmental organisation *Fe y Alegria* (faith and happiness) with support from the Foundation, works with the children of women who make their living selling goods on the streets of the capital city, San Salvador. The project staff reach the mothers and children through four centres in disadvantaged neighbourhoods. In this article, which is based on interviews, the project director, Marisa de Martinez, explains why the project has elected to work with this group of people.

right: children of street vendors spend their days with their mothers in the markets

Twelve years of war, and 60 years of military oppression have taken their toll on El Salvador. Unemployment rates stand at about 50 per cent; incidence of crime and violence, especially among the young, is high; and in rural areas the post-war reconstruction of the infrastructure and civil life is proceeding slowly. Yet there is a feeling of optimism as people start to organise themselves to improve their life conditions.

Most of the external aid to El Salvador is directed at persons displaced as a result of the war. This means that there is little support for other groups such as the urban poor. This is where the Children of Street Vendors project steps in. The women street vendors live under tremendous stress as they try to eke out a minimal living working long hours selling goods, and because of this they sometimes mistreat their children. Most of the children who we come into contact with are physically abused. The children in turn become aggressive and resort to fighting quickly. The children are victims of their mothers' disillusion and misery, while war and oppression have been their role models.

A space for life

The project was born at a critical moment, when life in El Salvador had little value: 1989 was a year in which many people lost their lives. The project arose from the urgency to create life; to defend the right to life for those who are vulnerable and defenceless: the children. With the establishment of the CINDES (*Centro Infantil de Desarrollo* – child development centres) we sought to create a space for life.

Children of street vendors are raised on the streets as they accompany their mothers who are selling their wares. The question has to be asked: what kind of person is created when raised under such desolate conditions? The project tries to make 'visible' those who are 'invisible'; those who do not count, who are rendered anonymous by being mere statistics. When we say that the project is aimed at the 'children of street vendors' we are giving names to them, and drawing their faces. We want the project to have approaches that work within the realities of the life of those we want to help.

Multi-functional centres

We opened the first CINDE in March 1989 in Soyapango, one of San Salvador's most marginalised, densely populated and poor urban areas. Our objective was to reach 75 children under seven years old. The response from the mothers was overwhelming and by the end of the year we were working with 120 children.

Between then and now we have opened another CINDE in Soyapango, and one each in Mejicanos and Zacamil. At present 340 children and their mothers are the direct beneficiaries of this project.

The four centres open their doors at seven in the morning, and close after the mothers' day of work is done. They provide stimulating activities, and medical care and nutrition. A doctor comes to each centre once a week to give medical care to the children. The children are taken on outings every so often, to places that they would never normally see. The CINDES also develop support networks for parents and provide practical help for their income generating activities. One of these is sessions where the mothers learn to make stuffed toys which they can then sell. The mothers are encouraged to become involved voluntarily in the operation of the centres.

The mothers' contribution

The mothers pay a small amount every day for their children to be at the CINDES. Although they earn very little, the women are usually willing to pay this because providing a plate of food for their children

top: the project takes the children on outings to places where they would normally never go

top right: among the many hazards facing children of street vendors is traffic

above: mothers show interest in the CINDES by attending parents meetings

on the street would otherwise be more expensive. By sending their children to the CINDES they know that their children are safe, get nutritious food, and have the chance to learn and interact with other children.

The mothers also take turns working in the centres, and they attend the workshops and discussion groups held regularly. The topics focus on young children, babies' needs, child development and so on. Having said this, we ourselves must realise that the involvement of mothers in the project's daily work is still limited as they have to work long hours to earn the minimum required to maintain their families. However, they have shown a keen interest in the CINDES and in attending the meetings, and frequently approach staff members for counselling.

What does the future hold

These have been seven years of creativity, of learning and teaching ourselves along the way. Through our initial work in ECD new programmes have emerged. We have established programmes for the mothers such as the education programme looking at childhood needs; the economic support programme that makes small loans; the handicraft workshops; the health programme; and the child recreation programme. We have also strengthened and coordinated links with other organisations working in this field. All these initiatives have emerged directly from the project's experiences and the needs of the children and mothers.

The children of the street vendors have benefited greatly from the CINDES' services and facilities. Their improved physical and intellectual development has allowed them to succeed within the formal school system. Mothers have gained more understanding of their children's needs and how to support and stimulate their development under very difficult home circumstances. By providing mothers and centre staff with information and support on health and nutrition, the project has been able to improve the children's well-being and increase people's understanding of these critical areas.

Project viability

Involving parents and local community organisations, as well as forging links with other organisations, have been significant factors in establishing project viability. Importantly, the Children of Street Vendors project has provided a realistic model for other community groups in the Latin American region. ┘

The Children of Street Vendors project recently won the second Oscar van Leer Award.

The Award was established in 1994 to mark the 80th birthday of Oscar van Leer, son of Bernard van Leer, who was the first Chairman of the Foundation's Board.

In this position he was instrumental in shaping the Foundation as it is today and, in particular in deciding that its main focus should be on young children.

The Award is given to a past or present project for excellence in enabling parents and communities to help young children realise their innate potential.

How the poor experience structural adjustment policies

When financial resources are scarce social budgets tend to be cut, often in line with development programmes which are linked to structural adjustment policies. The future of early childhood development programmes depends heavily on these policies and their impact on education budgets.

In Africa the impact of structural adjustment policies on household income and spending on education has been negative, and has been accompanied by a drop in per capita gross national product (GNP) and a decline in average incomes.

Spending on education has in general been reduced as percentages of GNP and the national budget, and in real terms as governments decrease their wage bills in accordance with structural adjustment policies.

The illustrations are taken from the report The suffering are the cornerstone in building a nation. *Details of the report are at the end of the article.*

Structural adjustment in Zimbabwe

The Africa Community Publishing and Development Trust of Zimbabwe has studied the effects of the Economic Structural Adjustment Programme (ESAP) on the poor in 16 districts around the country. The result of the study is a report entitled *The suffering are the cornerstone in building a nation* that is based on views collected through a participatory process involving 200 people, aged between 12 to over 70 years old, from the lowest income group in both rural and urban communities. The report gives an insight into these communities' views on the meaning of poverty, its effect on their lives, its causes and strategies which may help to alleviate poverty.

The strength of this report lies as much in its way of making as in its content in that it was a vehicle for people living in poverty to speak through. They – the people living in the disadvantaged communities – strongly make the point that they find it insulting to be called the 'poor': they would rather be called the 'have-nots', the 'deprived' or the 'suffering'.

Through the report the have-nots talk movingly about what poverty does to them: how it divides families; causes unnecessary sickness and death; and prevents their children from going to school. And worst of all, how it has them caught in a cruel cycle so that they see no future for their children. But they also talk about generosity and compassion, and a will to make things better.

The main cause of poverty

The have-nots clearly see many of the causes of poverty and see how these can be alleviated (see table on page 19). Throughout the report ESAP is cited even more often than drought or land shortage. The combination of large scale retrenchment, increases in the prices of basic goods and having to pay for health care and education, as defined by ESAP, has driven many families into poverty. The consensus is that:

> ESAP has worsened a situation that was already bad.

Yet ESAP was introduced by the government:

> … to improve living conditions, especially for the poorest groups. This means increasing real

> incomes and lowering unemployment by generating higher economic growth … in the short term the programme could have negative effects on poor and vulnerable groups' but that in the long term 'disadvantaged groups will have greater opportunities to improve income levels and welfare.'

Despite these forecasts the have-nots were unanimous in stating that ESAP has contributed to increasing poverty. They feel that it has benefited a privileged minority at the expense of the underprivileged majority, and widened the gap between them.

A plea for better coordination

The have-nots felt that measures to alleviate poverty do not reach those most in need, and that this is partly due to uncoordinated development

Causes of poverty	Strategies to alleviate poverty
Growing up in poverty ('slave mentality' and attitudes of apathy and dependency)	• reorganise social services from bottom-up so that children's basic needs are met • introduce relevant education to develop children's potential and confidence • provide self-reliance and economic skills training for school leavers • link participatory adult education to production to encourage independence
Personal disasters (death of breadwinner, illness, disablement)	• organise accessible social services; priority for the elderly, widows and disabled
Negative aspects of culture	• build development policies and programmes on positive aspects; work with traditional leaders in progressive ways
Inaccessible social services and development programmes	• organise social services from the bottom up involving the beneficiaries • government and donors to coordinate support for self-help projects initiated by the people themselves • decentralise social welfare and development agencies, and re-train staff to give communities a central role • introduce a maximum wage and measures to ensure that high incomes are invested in economic growth
Lack of capital to improve economic activities	• ensure that credit schemes end up in the hands of small farmers and enterprises • provide training before extending credit
Shortage of land and the means to use the land productively	• link land reform to loan programmes for agricultural inputs, tillage, irrigation, marketing and transport; make available special support for women • encourage rural enterprises to produce agricultural inputs and process products locally
Drought	• invest in improving water supplies • involve communities in planning and implementing water schemes
Elephants	• introduce wildlife management programmes that involve the communities
ESAP	• revise or abandon ESAP • remove fees for clinics and schools for low income groups, and control prices • emphasise employment creation around the provision of basic needs such as affordable housing • encourage investment in people rather than in machines • revise laws to encourage enterprise development
Lack of democracy in economic policy making	• involve communities in economic decision-making and programme planning

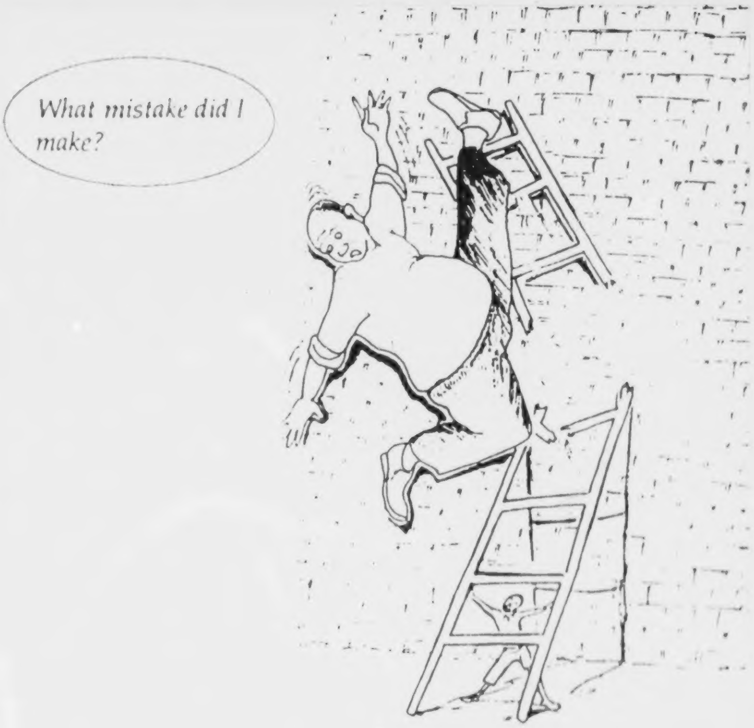
planning and implementation.

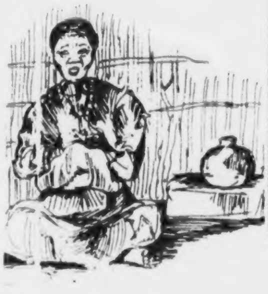
An example of the latter is that one area receives development assistance from so many agencies that local initiative and control is destroyed, while in a needier neighbouring area, not one single development agency is operating.

Furthermore, the very little that does reach recipients is often mismanaged, raising the question: why is effective development and management training not provided before resources arrive?

Another criticism levied is that leaders rarely consult them, the beneficiaries. Programmes are planned and implemented without regard for the beneficiaries, who are also capable of thinking and making creative suggestions:

'Policy makers think for us but they don't know our situation well. So we end up with foreign ideas (like ESAP and Five Year Development Plans) which are not practical and appropriate for Zimbabwe.'


What mistake did I make?



You want to know how I define poverty. How can you ask that question when you yourself see that I live in poverty? The definition of poverty is right in front of you. Look at me: I stay alone. I don't have enough food. I have no decent clothing or accommodation. I have no clean water to drink nearby. Look at my swollen leg. I can't get to the clinic which is too far for me to walk. So what kind of definition of poverty do you expect me to give you which is better than what you are seeing with your naked eyes?

Dealing with donor agencies

The report goes on to say that:

> The economic policy packages sealed with the donor community purportedly on behalf of the people came as an unpredictable hailstorm. The people find themselves ill-prepared and the failure of these projects is not unexpected.
>
> It seems the dialogue is between the leaders (bureaucracy) and the donor community. The grassroots may only have their names quoted for use.

The cornerstone in building the nation

The have-nots firmly believe that the approaches listed in the table

> ... would really alleviate poverty and help us build wealth. As farmers, growers of herbs and fruit trees, welders, blacksmiths, tailors, basket makers, carpenters, tool makers, vendors and builders, we have the energy, skills and commitment, and only need a little support to emerge from poverty and become self-reliant.
>
> Our energy, creativity and talents, not recognised for so long, are the cornerstone in building the nation.

All quotes are taken from *The suffering are the cornerstone in building a nation*. Further information on this publication and the Africa Community Publishing and Development Trust can be obtained from: Africa Community Publishing and Development Trust, P.O. Box 7250, Harare, Zimbabwe. Tel: +263.4 722981. Fax: +263.4 722168.

Extra information taken from: *Education, adjustment and reconstruction: options for change*, Fernando Reimers and Luis Tiburcio, UNESCO, 1993.

Report from the field

India: educational oases

In 1993 Bodh Shiksha Samiti (Bodh) began its Educational Oases project – an early childhood development (ECD) project focusing on developing attitudes and skills which motivate and empower children to learn independently. In this article Bodh describes how it creates 'learning environments' in Jaipur's urban slums for children, teachers, parents, families and the community, in which individuals are embedded within a cycle of learning and teaching.

This article is based on a report written by Bodh entitled *A project on innovative approaches in early childhood education: Status Report*.

Bodh's view of ECD is one in which children are not seen as isolated entities. Their social environment must be understood before trying to counter its adverse effects through a gradual process of persuasion. The Educational Oases project is one of transforming the slum community's approach to children. Bodh does not believe in coercing children, but in letting them develop their own interests. Their activities are not interfered with except to see that children develop a sense of tolerance towards each other.

Reaching the children in their own space

As the community's initial response to the pre-schools was lukewarm, other means of reaching the children had to be found. The children tended to play around their own courtyards or *aangans*, and so attempts were made to gather them in small groups in the *aangans*. Child-teachers – young people from the community – who knew the children and their parents were encouraged to work with the young children. This developed in the child-teachers a sense of concern and responsibility towards younger children. Mobilising these child-teachers was formidable. The largest hurdle was the parents who preferred that their older children be engaged in paid jobs. However, despite the difficulties, the child-teachers have become invaluable in running *aangan* activities and in keeping younger children at the pre-schools.

Launching pads

The *aangans* soon became the launching pads for the initially reluctant children to come to the pre-schools. However, they should not be seen as merely a transition-point. They are instrumental in establishing rapport with individual households and with the community as a whole. They are places for dialogue between the community and the pre-school; and people pass by, observe, comment, seek clarification, give advice and also criticise. This means that there is continuous assessment by the community. The boundaries between home and school have been blurred, and the concept of pre-school changes from an alien, frightening environment into a familiar place.

right and below: typical scenes from slum areas

The *aangans* have another, more subtle, impact on the community. To see so much importance and respect for the children serves as an example of an alternative caring approach to children. Thus a process of change in the parents' and community's attitude and behaviour towards children starts.

The mother-teachers

The pre-schools and *aangans* are staffed by both teachers and mother-teachers – women from the community – who receive basic training. The mother-teachers are the lynch-pins of the entire project. They are nearest to the realities in the slums; they have access to the innermost corners of the households; and they can talk freely to the women folk.

Convincing the community

It was not easy to convince the community in general about the desirability of ECD. Furthermore, the elders – mostly men – did not welcome the idea of women getting involved in activities outside their homes, and they believed that the working women should only use their time for wage earning. But after several meetings their attitude changed. From the beginning Bodh's approach was to go along with the community and not to confront it on any matter.

There are other difficulties too. Though the mother-teachers do their job satisfactorily, they lack initiative and tend to stick to routine. Strategies have to be devised to bring the mother-teachers out of their routine. On their part, the mother-teachers enjoy a change in their position in the community as a result of becoming mother-teachers, and they have to resist the temptation of feeling superior vis-à-vis other women.

In the pre-schools

Bodh provides different kinds of teaching aids to the pre-schools, though they are not imposed on them. The children often play with articles from their surroundings such as bottle-tops, bits of plastic, and small pieces of wood. They bring these to the school and play with them rather than with the teaching aids and toys. Neither the teachers nor the mother-teachers interfere with them, and the children themselves slowly start to use the toys and teaching aids.

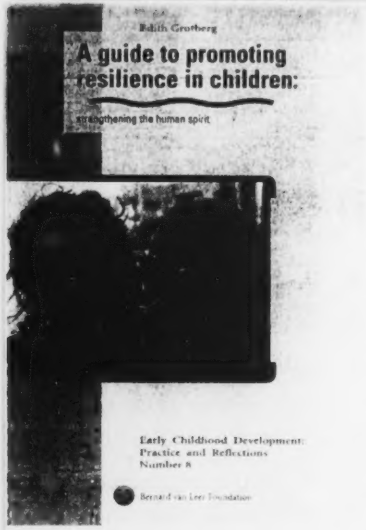
The gradual broadening of the children's experiences, which would otherwise be limited by their environment, is the objective behind the ECD programme.

Dear Reader,

We would like to remind you that we always welcome hearing from you.

We would like to know about your experiences, ideas, and successes and failures in working in the field of early childhood care and development. Many of the articles found in the Newsletter come from readers.

If you wish to share your experiences with other readers, please write to the Communications Section of the Foundation at the address given on the back page.


Edith Grotberg

A guide to promoting resilience in children:

strengthening the human spirit

Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections Number 8

Bernard van Leer Foundation

A new Foundation publication

A guide to promoting resilience in children: strengthening the human spirit

Edith Grotberg, Ph.D.

This is the latest publication in the Foundation's new series 'Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections', which replaces the 'Occasional Papers' series.

Resilience is a universal capacity which allows a person, group or community to prevent, minimise or overcome the damaging effects of adversity. Though the concept of resilience seems to be a western concept – and there is no word for 'resilience' in many languages – it is a universal understanding in the sense that people draw on resilience factors or features as they respond to adversity.

Fourteen countries participated in an International Resilience Project, the results of which show that fewer than half of the adults caring for children promote resilience in them. This guide, based on the findings, will help individuals and programmes to incorporate the promotion of resilience into their work with children.

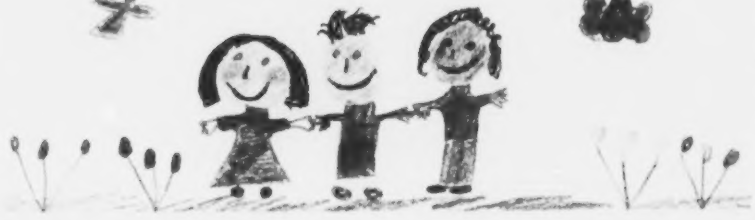
Participants in the International Resilience Project are incorporating it into their work with children and families, and several international organisations have established policy on incorporating resilience concepts into programmes that they support.

Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections No 8
Published October 1995, 56 pages
ISBN 90-6195-038-4

On October 13 the Knowledge Utilization Society gave Edith Grotberg the Philip R.A. May Award for Excellence in International Research.

This is in recognition of her significant contributions to the field of research and service made through the International Resilience Project and this guide.

Resources

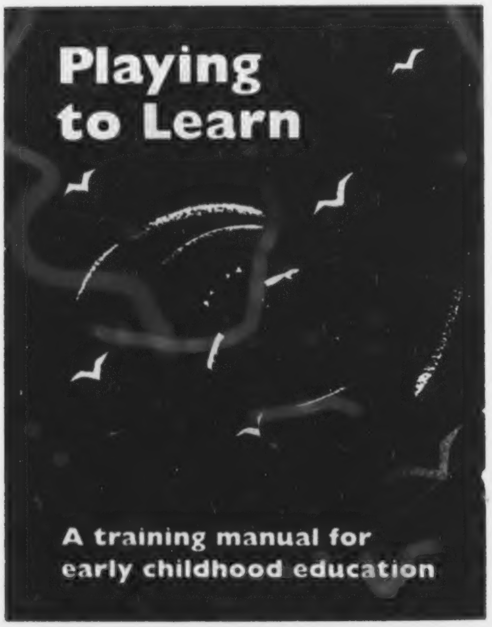


right: this illustration from Un mundo de criança: aprender a ler o mundo *is by nine year old* Marta Guedes

Un mundo de criança: aprender a ler o mundo

This spiral bound book *Un mundo de criança: aprender a ler o mundo* – A world of children: learning to read the world – is a collection of poems and prose, much of which is written by children. All the pieces focus on multiculturalism, and they were collected by a team of primary school teachers. Through the poetry and prose they try to give solutions to some of the difficulties that teachers encounter while trying to teach children about the world and its many different peoples. The issues highlighted by the poems and prose can be discussed, debated and dramatised by children, educators and teachers. The makers of the book hope that it will be a valuable contribution to enriching the world of the children by helping develop their imagination, friendship and respect for others: qualities essential for creating a more just and harmonious society. *Un mundo de criança: aprender a ler o mundo* is in Portuguese and is colourfully illustrated throughout by children and adults.

Un mundo de criança: aprender a ler o mundo is a joint production between OIKOS and UNICEF. Further information on this publication, and other materials, is available from OIKOS – Cooperaçao e Desenvolvimento, Av. Visconde de Valmor 35, 3o D – 1000 Lisboa, Portugal. Tel: +351.1.7964719/7940363/4/5, Fax: +351.1.7939791. Or UNICEF, Av. Antonio Augusto de Aguiar 56, 3o E – 1000 Lisboa, Portugal. Tel +351.1.547843/547858/547913.



Playing to learn

Playing to learn is a practical training manual for trainers of early childhood education workers to effectively implement activities that promote children's holistic growth and development. The manual is produced by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation in India and provides field tested methods in early childhood education which emphasise play as a crucial means to learning. The manual tries to avoid talking about abstract concepts, instead it tries to spell out concrete suggestions for implementation. It lays stress on the organisational skills and holistic perspectives of ECD workers rather than on a list of activities to be followed mechanically. The manual is illustrated throughout with useful diagrams. Each section has some suggestions for participatory exercises to go through with the trainees. The manual's first two chapters look at self-understanding and through that, understanding children. The other chapters look at organising space and materials, ideas for the classroom, enhancing ECD workers' skills, and the home and the community. This manual is useful for teacher trainers, and people working in child development centres. It is available in English.

Playing to learn is produced by the M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, 3rd Cross Street, Taramani Institutional Area, Madras 600 113, India. Tel: +91.44.2351229/2351698, Fax: +91.44.2351319.

Images of HIV/AIDS around the world

This is a 25 minute long video documentary featuring excerpts from 112 television public service announcements from 27 countries in Africa. The video is fast-paced and entertaining, and demonstrates how different cultures have used humour, love, logic and authority to inform audiences about HIV/AIDS. It illustrates the creativity used in presenting safe-sex and HIV/AIDS through symbols, letters, and people. The video is useful for anyone creating HIV/AIDS educational materials in Africa. While particularly helpful to those working in cross-cultural contexts, it also describes basic principles of constructing effective messages.

The video is produced by Deborah Johnson with support from the Stanford Health Promotion Resource Centre, and costs US$ 39 plus shipping. Further information can be obtained from Development through Self-Reliance, 9111 Guilford Road, Columbia, MD 21046, USA. Tel: +1.800.8750037, Fax: +1.301.4904146, e-mail dsr@us.net. It is also available in Kenya, Namibia, Senegal, Sierra Leone, South Africa, Tanzania and Zimbabwe through Development through Self-Reliance distributors.

Bernard van Leer
Foundation
Newsletter
Number 82 January 1996

Text from the *Newsletter* may be reproduced or adapted without the publisher's permission, provided it is not distributed for profit and with attribution to the Bernard van Leer Foundation. Unless otherwise stated, all photographs are by courtesy of the project concerned.

ISSN 0921-5840

Bernard van Leer Foundation
PO Box 82334
2508 EH The Hague
The Netherlands
Tel: (070) 351 2040
Telefax: (070) 350 2373

About the Foundation

The Bernard van Leer Foundation is an international, philanthropic and professional institution based in The Netherlands. The Foundation's income is derived from the Van Leer Group of Companies – established by Bernard van Leer in 1919 – a worldwide industrial enterprise of which the Foundation is the principal beneficiary. Created in 1949 for broad humanitarian purposes, the Foundation concentrates on the development of low-cost, community-based initiatives in early childhood care and education for socially and culturally disadvantaged children from birth to eight years of age.

The Foundation provides financial support and professional guidance to governmental, academic and voluntary bodies setting up projects to enable disadvantaged children to benefit fully from edu-cational and social development opportunities. The Foundation currently supports approximately 100 major projects in some 40 developing and industrialised countries. The dissemination, adaptation and replication of successful project outcomes are crucial to the Foundation's work.

Grants are not made to individuals nor for general support to organisations. The Foundation does not provide study, research or travel grants. No grants are made in response to general appeals. In accordance with its statutes, the Foundation gives preference to countries in which the Van Leer Group of Companies is established.

Administration

Trustees: Chairman: I. Samrén (Sweden); Mrs M.C. Benton (USA); W.H. Brouwer (Netherlands); W.W. Cross (USA); R. Freudenberg (Germany); J. Kremers (Netherlands); H.B. van Liemt (Netherlands); A. Mar-Haim (Israel); P.J.J. Rich (France)

Executive Director: M.C.E. van Gendt

A new Trustee

The Foundation would like to welcome Mr Amos Mar-Haim to its Board of Trustees. Mr Mar-Haim joined the Board on 25 August 1995. Mr Mar-Haim comes from Israel were he was born in 1938 and, since qualifying in Economics and Business Management from the Hebrew University in Jerusalem in 1967, has mostly worked in the country's industrial sector.

At present he is Chairman of the Board of Directors of the Israel Postal Authority and has several additional responsibilities, among others member of the advisory board of the Bank of Israel. From 1989 to 1994 he was the Senior Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem and this experience has given him an insight into social development issues. He feels strongly that working with children is to invest in a better future, and therefore stands firmly behind the work and the philosophy of the Foundation.

Mr Mar-Haim has been familiar with the Foundation for over 30 years through his business contacts with Mr Oscar van Leer when he was Director General at the Ministry of Trade and Industry, and through his contact with the Van Leer Jerusalem Institute as Senior Deputy Mayor of Jerusalem. Throughout this period Mr Mar-Haim has always thought highly of the Foundation, and feels proud to become one of its Trustees.

Mr Mar-Haim is also a member of the boards of directors of other companies and organisations. He lives in Jerusalem, is married and has five children.

As of 1 January 1996 the chair of the Board of Trustees has changed. The new chairperson is Mr Ivar Samrén.

The Foundation is grateful to Mr Sjeng Kremers for his chairmanship of the Foundation's Board of Trustees for the last eight years.

Bernard van Leer
Foundation
Newsletter
Number 82 April 1996

The environment of the child

above: how does the environment of a child affect his/her development? (Venezuela)

In 1993, the Foundation set up the Environment of the Child project to look at one crucial aspect of the period of childhood: learning to respond and interact with external factors confronting the individual. Such environmental instigators stimulate the child, elicit responses from the child and, by all proven accounts, affect the child's development. The question is, positive or negative, to what extent do they affect development? Will a quality environment unequivocally result in high development? In the case of a significantly disadvantaged environment, such as a child growing up in extreme poverty, do balancing factors exist that mitigate the detrimental effects on the course of the child's development?

The project – which is the subject of the main theme of this *Newsletter* – considered these questions within the broader context of what constitutes a good environment. Ultimately, four case studies (in France, India, Kenya and Venezuela), an analytical report and a concluding conference examined the issue of what comprises quality in large-scale programmes for young disadvantaged children.

The Foundation considered the project a self-reflective exercise, an attempt to link theory with practice by 1) looking at ways in which large-scale projects can improve the environment of the child; 2) establishing a correlation between child development and caregivers' beliefs; and 3) using these results to help in determining the future directions of the Foundation's support.

A child does not exist in a vacuum

The effects of poverty and discrimination, two environmental conditions that threaten a child's development, were examined by Terezinha Nunes as a basis for the project. In her book, also entitled *The environment of the child*,[1] Nunes asks, 'How can one best help children who are born into these threatening environments? How can one choose the best course of action and evaluate the impact of such interventions?' Her reflections pay particular attention to how caregivers' beliefs, feelings and behaviour affect the development of children.

In this issue

The Environment of the child including the 'Environment of the child' project *pages 1-4*; 'In search of the rainbow' *page 5*; 'The interface of theory and practice' *page 11*

Also **India:** strengths of the cultural mileu *page 6*, **France:** the impact of parental involvement *page 9*, **Venezuela:** perspectives and potentials *page 10*; **Kenya:** resources versus resourcefulness *page 12*

Network news *page 14*

Reports from the field Mozambique displaced children and customary traditional practices *page 17*; Kenya some realities of a community-based healthcare programme *page 19*; Netherlands: Maarten's theory *page 20*

New publications from the Foundation *page 22*

Resources *page 22*

New Foundation Trustee *page 24*

PS 026632

Contextualising outcomes

Nunes establishes a number of themes which run as consistent threads throughout the following stages of the projects. She considers the issues of complexity of environment, stakeholders' and beneficiaries' perspectives on early childhood development (ECD), and varietal contextual elements which Dr. Martin Woodhead, along the lines of Super and Harkness, later labels developmental niche (see pages 5-8). Positive developmental outcomes in ECD programmes are dependent on all these factors and Nunes argues that intervention programmes must find goals that describe the particular outcomes which are understood as positive for the group in question. In so doing, the goals and standards of a dominant culture must not be imposed, nor should the routes which may be difficult for a particular group to access be blocked. 'The specific factors that must be taken into account will vary with the location of the project, the nature of the threat to the children's well-being, and the specific objectives to be attained,' she maintains.

above: buffers do seem to exist to offset the detrimental effects of a child's surroundings (India)

What came out of Nunes's exploration of children facing environments of poverty and discrimination was the encouraging news that buffers do seem to exist to offset the detrimental effects of a child's surroundings. Following McLoyd,[2] three possible mitigating factors were put forth: parents' characteristics, children's characteristics and external factors. Examining the properties of this third potential mediator provided the subsequent focus of the project.

From the very beginning, the term 'external factors' was intended to include the socio-cultural factors interacting with a child and not the physical factors of his or her environment. A disadvantaged environment was a significant criterium in the choice of the four case studies; it was therefore understood that the physical resources of the child's environment would not be optimal. In this regard, Nunes also excluded biological inputs, such as nutrition and the incidence of disease in her study, explaining, 'all children should receive adequate nutrition and health care independently of whether these factors affect psychological development; there is thus no need to validate nutritional and health care on the basis of their effects on psychological development.'[3]

The physical environment

However, as nearly all the cases proved, it was virtually impossible to divorce the physical aspects of the programmes studied from the socio-cultural. In fact, three of the four large-scale programmes considered meeting basic nutritional needs one of the fundamental goals of intervention. To ensure quality in large-scale programmes, three studies recommended increases in physical resources (wages, infrastructure, materials) and one suggested creating emergency feeding centres within pre-schools (Kenya). As Dr. Woodhead concludes in his analytical report, '... there is no escaping the implications of resource issues for child development, in terms of both creating opportunities and constraining what can be achieved within a programme and within a community.' He raised the question for the future, whether, before quality is evaluated, a bottom line should be defined, at which point available resources are considered so low that quality cannot be sustained by any standards.[4]

In assessing the socio-cultural factors of the child's environment, a holistic framework for the research was developed, based heavily on the ecological approach of Bronfenbrenner and the concept of development niche mentioned above. The final, integrated methodology is described by Dr. Woodhead in his article (see pages 5-8). Each of the studies approached the fundamental framework in very different ways: the goal of analysing quality in large-scale programmes to result in its eventual enhancement was moulded in each case to fit the team's own priorities. In a positive light, this could be seen as re-shaping the goals of the project to better address the cultural context of each specific environment.

Four case studies: the environment and ECD

The French study was notable in its strict focus: four crèches were observed to determine how the environment of a disadvantaged child can be significantly enriched by a particular form of day care: the multicultural parent-run day care centre (see page 9). Observations of adult-child interactions led researchers to conclude that, for affective and cognitive development, children need not only their parents, but a community of adults. Moreover, they discovered that while children from socially disadvantaged milieus perform less complex cognitive interactions, parental participation as witness in the crèches compensated for this.

A tenet of Woodhead's, the value of resourcefulness over resources in enhancing quality is illustrated quite significantly in both the Indian and Kenyan studies. He reminds us of the title of a 1994 Foundation report, 'Building on people's strengths' (which, incidentally, also deals with early childhood in Africa), and then promotes the idea of 'an approach to quality development which does not merely emulate the quality standards treasured by affluent nations, but instead offers legitimacy for tapping locally available human and material resources for child development ...'[5]

The level of poverty-induced deprivation observed in Tamil Nadu (India) is extreme. Yet, despite this poor socio-economic level, reports Dr. Radha Paul (see pages 6-7), several positive influences serve as mitigating factors, namely, the culturally caring behaviour of mothers, the performance of the crèche workers and the high value placed on the child within the culture. However, a number of detracting factors in the pre-school programme and community are noted by Dr. Paul and the question remains whether the quality of the programme can be improved.

right: in some contexts providing the children with basic care is the priority (India)

Kenya's resources/resourcefulness dilemma takes another form (see pages 12-13). Children here are caught on a plateau of change. As traditional mechanisms for care and child development within a clan or community are being lost, perspectives on appropriate care are becoming increasingly complex, 'ranging from ... specific ethnic contexts to the western or modern,' as Barbara Garner Koech[6] phrases it. During this period of intense economic and societal change, the rights and needs of children are being neglected and adequate opportunities have not yet arisen to consider their plight. Despite widespread pre-school programmes in Kenya, 'many children fall through the gaps and discrepancies in service delivery' and Koech considers ways to alleviate this dilemma in her study.

A multitude of perspectives is evident in the Venezuelan case (see page 10). Officials, programme managers, day care mothers, mothers and children are seen as having inconsistent perspectives due to the expansion of this large-scale programme in a relatively short period of time. These stakeholders in the quality of a programme, as Dr Woodhead calls them, need to accomplish a more complementary understanding of their various perspectives and goals. While significant potential for increased quality in the national day care programme was reported, researchers saw a great need for increased negotiation among stakeholders through communication.

Relevance for ECD?

Woodhead takes the view that the results of the four studies underline the environment's impact on child development and, furthermore, that mitigating factors can indeed offset negative factors in a disadvantaged environment. The results also maintain his anti-universal approach to early childhood development and the importance of quality understood in a developmental niche. Beyond location, location, location, ECD intervention programmes should consider context, context, context.

Nunes's original thoughts on the complexity of environments are expanded upon and consider the importance of 'systems of belief, knowledge and values which relate to particular cultural, familial and institutional contexts and aspirations for childhood.' Appraisal of context and perspectives within a particular setting, Woodhead argues, 'is an all-important part of the process of identifying quality – to counterbalance the tendency to impose so-called universal standards.' A more empathetic appreciation of the relationship between socialisation practices and cultural values is encouraged.[7]

His resulting philosophy for application is Practice Appropriate to the Context of Early Development (PACED). As he describes in his paper *In search of the rainbow* (see pages 5-8), it is an inclusive process of contextual appraisal, which takes into account all the perspectives, all the value and belief systems, the resource realities and other developmental niche factors which make up the environment of the child. Negotiation forms the basis of the process and Dr Woodhead suggests asking a number of questions to establish appropriate communication channels:[8]

> who are the stakeholders in the quality of the programme?
> Who are the perceived beneficiaries from quality?
> What are taken to be indicators of quality?

Before successfully evaluating elements of quality in an early childhood development programme, the ways in which this range of perspectives shapes the ecology of children's development, and therefore the experience of the programme, must be acknowledged.

PACED realities

When researchers in the four case studies had a formal opportunity to respond to Dr Woodhead's findings during a conference held at the Foundation in December 1995, all supported PACED as a general concept. Representative of the responses was Dr Radha Paul, who commented, 'Dr Woodhead's analysis is indeed culturally sensitive, socially emphatic and contextually realistic.' But differences arose among the researchers when they applied the means of PACED to individual situations.

Through her observations and Woodhead's comments, Maria Carlota Terán de Ruesta came to recognise the importance of stakeholders in Venezuela's expanding, national system of child care programmes. The top-down approach of defining quality that has been Venezuela's experience has failed to take all relevant perspectives into consideration. 'In recognizing the importance of the cultural context in the process of defining and putting in operation quality levels in child care programmes, an effort must be made to learn the expectancies and beliefs of the programme participants,' she concluded.[9]

Charles Tijus maintains that PACED is already in place in the French multicultural parent-run crèche programme in that many contextual perspectives are addressed: parents are convinced that they should participate in the programme, professional day care providers are convinced of the worthiness of parents' participation, municipalities are convinced of the importance of multicultural crèches, French society is convinced of parents' need to have time to participate in their children's care, etc. However, he turns his attention to the extreme case of India to question whether a contextual approach is always of primary importance. Because fundamental needs are not being met in this country, he argues, 'There is no need to take the context into account, but there is a need for finding the means for reaching the goal of providing the child with basic care: how to find food.' This again raises the unshakeable spectre of resources in the environment of the child.

Quality is linked to larger issues

Dr. Paul, administrator of the Indian study, has a different interpretation of quality and context in the pre-schools examined in her study, although she, too, acknowledges the effect of resources. 'To my mind, quality is linked with a larger ethical issue, namely, the right of the child and the rights of the poor in general.' Perceived quality can lead to complacency, she warns. 'There is no doubt that the crèche programme [in India] is contributing to the children's development, despite the constraints that are present,' she says. 'But the question to be asked is: Are the children getting the best quality service possible within the contextual reality?'

A viable accounting of perceived and unperceived resources is considered by the Kenyan researchers to be one of the greatest benefits of their exploration into quality in ECD. Barbara Garner Koech and Dr. Octavian Gakuru welcomed the PACED model for 'open, responsible discussion' to increase awareness of potential resources and enhance resourcefulness leading to a better environment for the child. An ever-increasing complexity of perspectives has jeopardized the development of quality care in Kenya, the authors assert. 'The PACED model, focusing on the relativity of quality perspectives might provide an entry point for the different stakeholders to share their views, beliefs and expectations outside the hierarchy of professional wisdom,' they say, adding that its implementation could perhaps 'even challenge aspects and relevance of this wisdom within an atmosphere free of vexing and superiority.'[10]

A PACED future?

Aside from the researchers, issues on implementing Woodhead's concept for establishing quality in ECD were also addressed by outside consultants and members of the Foundation staff. Teresa Albanez, a representative of UNICEF, raised an argument to Dr. Woodhead's strong anti-universal premise: 'We live in a global economy ... and (there exists) a universality of aspirations. There is increasing concern and organizational mobilisation for children's rights, and an increasing recognition of the need to strengthen international mechanisms to enforce children's rights.'

Also mentioned was the fact that, despite overwhelming attention to diversity across cultures, not enough weight was given to diversity within a culture. Liana Gertsch, a Foundation programme specialist who contributed her theory versus practice interface perspective to the project (see pages 11-13), considered this to be an area deserving more focus. 'The (study) should also show culture's disadvantages such as gender aspects, or cultural chauvinism. Many groups that the Foundation works with are culturally chauvinistic and we need to be aware of this.'

Impressions overall were that the quality of intervention in programmes for early child development can be improved. For the Foundation's role, aspects of the paced concept appear to provide an adequate tool to address future directions and long-term perspectives: the possi-bility of producing a tool kit, based on the discussions about quality, was introduced by Horacio Walker, previously Head of Fundamental Studies at the Foundation.

From Dr. Woodhead's perspective, the concept of practice appropriate to the context of early development complements the objectives of the Foundation. He points out that the philosophy is not entirely new to the Foundation, referring again to the 1994 report, 'Building on people's strengths.'

New 'indigenous' models of ECD must be developed, based on the knowledge and experience of families and communities and adapted to local conditions. These models would combine the covert learning processes of traditional socialisation with the overt teaching methods of modern educational practice. They would thus recognise and accept the validity of local experience and traditional wisdom and be open to the global human environment as well. ┘

Notes

1. Nunes T (1994) *The environment of the child* Occasional paper No 5 Bernard van Leer Foundation, the Netherlands, ISSN 90 6195-026-0
2. McLoyd, V.C. (1990). 'The impact of economic hardship on Black families and children. Psychological distress, parenting and socioemotional development' in *Child Development*, 61, pp. 31-46
3. Nunes Occasional paper, p. viii
4. Woodhead, p. 53
5. Woodhead, p. 49
6. Koech, B.G. (1995). Comments on Martin Woodhead's Report, p3
7. Woodhead, p. 68
8. Woodhead p. 36
9. Maria Carlota Ruesta, comments on Martin Woodhead's Report, p. 4
10. Barbara Garner Koech, comments on Martin Woodhead's Report, p. 5

The environment of the child

In search of the rainbow

above: what are the ingredients that enrich large-scale day care programmes? (France)

Dr. Martin Woodhead is a developmental psychologist and Senior Lecturer in the School of Education at The Open University, United Kingdom. He was commissioned by the Foundation to analyse the findings of the four case studies and draw conclusions for quality in large-scale day care programmes. His resulting paper, *In search of the rainbow: pathways to quality in large-scale programmes for young disadvantaged children,** examines the ingredients that contribute to or detract from quality in these environments and offers ideas for enriching large-scale programmes in the future.

Woodhead begins with his experience that quality is a universal desire in early childhood development. 'All those responsible for early childhood programmes professed to having issues of quality uppermost in their minds ... But the consensus soon evaporated once the conversation turned to particulars: about organisation, staffing, programme strategy, resource availability, relationship to family and community, care and education objectives, and so on.'

He calls this situation a diversity of quality and confirms that this notion was reinforced within each of the four study communities. This concept provides Woodhead with a springboard for the central message of his report, that the tendency for Euro-American models of quality to dominate research, policy, training and practice in early childhood development, 'fuelled by dominant theories in developmental psychology' is 'untenable and unhelpful'. Such 'universalistic thinking' is as dangerous as its extreme alternative, 'self-defeating relativism', and he explains that he supports a middle course, guided by the principle: 'Quality is relative, but not arbitrary'.

Diversity of quality

In introducing the case studies, Woodhead discusses their conceptual framework, which sheds welcome light on their 'diversity of quality'. The ecological approach of Bronfenbrenner[1] was combined with the concept of developmental niche put forth by Super and Harkness[2], to provide for a holistic approach in examining quality in the four environments.

'The child is depicted as growing up in the context of the microsystems of family and of pre-school. Within each microsystem, the impact of the environment is powerfully mediated by the beliefs and expectations of caregivers, as expressed through the extent and character of their specific interactions with the child. The relationships between the microsystems, in terms of shared or conflicting mutual beliefs of caregivers, as well as active points of contact, is referred to as the mesosystem. Finally, while the child's immediate experiences are shaped within the micro- and mesosystems, indirectly they are strongly influenced by wider forces, such as the employment patterns of parents (the exosystem) and by the overall economic and political situation (the macrosystem).

The concept of the developmental niche embraces both the tangible aspects of a child's physical and social environment as well as the more elusive but equally powerful systems that regulate the child's relationships – the expectations on children which affect the way they are treated and which the children themselves incorporate within their identity.'

Relating these aspects to diversity of quality, Woodhead quotes Myers[3]: 'Beliefs merge with values in helping to give meaning to practices by defining the kind of child (and adult) a particular society seeks to produce in the socialisation process.'

A different approach for each study

The four studies handled the ecological approach differently. The two in Venezuela and India are seen by Woodhead as providing a 'comprehensive assessment of characteristics and interrelationships of home and pre-school environments ... as well as attempting to correlate these with children's level of functioning on psychometric measures.' In Kenya, where research focused on the children's home, family and community environments, Woodhead emphasises the 'impact on parental resources and attitudes of wider influences in the exosystem.' The French study, which examined a parent-run pre-school, bridged the 'divide between the two key microsystems in the young child's life.'

Before going into his in-depth analysis, Woodhead pointed out two noteworthy elements of the individual results. First, although the studies were intended to focus on the 0-3 year age group, this group was strongly represented only in the French case. In the other studies, 'the focus was necessarily widened to consider the situation of 0-3 year olds in the context of existing provisions designed mainly for 4-6 year olds,' he explains, adding that in most of the cases there was a trend toward absorption of younger children into pre-school programmes designed for older children. In this regard, he says, 'There can be little dispute about the inadequacy of current arrangements. Passive absorption of 0-3 year old children into institutional settings planned for 4-5 year olds, according to a model of teaching designed for 6-8 year olds, is unlikely to be developmentally productive by any standards!'

Second, although the four teams began with a common set of research questions, each ultimately designed its own study 'in light of local circumstances', determined by their own established priorities. Since there is no shared methodology, direct comparability is impossible. Woodhead also emphasises that the studies are indicative of the variety of contexts, and should not be considered representational of programmes within a particular country or region.

Venezuela

'The study illustrates the problems associated with expanding a large-scale programme in a short time period with low and diminishing material resources', says Woodhead. The extensive comparisons drawn between microsystems highlight the 'marked differences in perspectives amongst those involved, for example about the goals of the programme and the functions of the day care mothers. These differences suggest a strong case for greater dialogue/communication. Second, observations of child carepractice revealed discrepancies between what children are actually doing, and how carers, parents, etc. perceive their role in children's learning.'

Woodhead uses this example in showing different 'stakeholder perspectives' (see below), revealed through questions asking how the children spend their time in the programme. 'Mothers emphasised mainly basic care and play, while day care mothers emphasised developmental and educational activities ... Clearly these differences reflect the different experiences of the two groups, and the fact that the carers have undergone a basic training, which would emphasise child development goals.' This situation, Woodhead reports, suggests a need for debate and training studies.

Kenya

Woodhead found Kenya remarkable among African countries for its well-established system of community-run pre-school education. However, in his impressions of the school system's impact on early childhood quality, he points out that this great emphasis on schooling results in an environment which is 'highly competitive, with assessment, selection and ability ranking a regular part of the children's experience throughout their school career ...' Pre-school plays a central role in terms of access to future schooling and curriculum: and is one of the major factors accounting for enthusiasm for pre-school 'even amongst the poorest rural communities.' Pressure for the absorption of small children into pre-school is a problem here for the 0-3 age group.

India: strengths of the cultural milieu

by Dr Radha Paul

The following has been prepared from Early Childhood Development and Environment: A Study Conducted by the Indian Council for Child Welfare, Tamil Nadu *written by Dr Radha Paul. The study was based in 44 creches run by four of the leading NGOs in Tamil Nadu, India (the Tamil Nadu branches of the Indian Council for Child Welfare and the Indian Red Cross Society, the Indian Women's Association of Madras and the Guild of Service, Central Madras). Each creche was located in a different community, 27 within the city of Madras and 17 in rural communities. For each creche, the investigators carried out interviews with the careworker, made observations of the creche environment and the homes of 10 children aged 3-4, interviewed their mothers, and carried out group discussions with the community and involved NGOs.*

In India, the conditions of poverty facing millions of families have made State supplements imperative in the areas of care, nutrition and health of children. A massive programme for integrated child development has been launched by the government to ensure that these basic needs are met. NGOs are also playing a significant role of intervention among the poorer socio-economic groups, filling some of the gaps that exist in the area of child care. To date, these programmes have not received much investigative attention. Therefore this study is limited to NGO implemented creche programmes.

In assessing the level of development of 3-4 year olds from the lower socio-economic group attending the creche programmes, the objectives of our research were the following: 1) to study the nature of deprivation experienced by the child due to the socio-economic situation of the family; 2) to study the beliefs and practices regarding early childhood development and their impact; 3) to study the role of the creche programme and the creche worker as mediating factors; and 4) to identify issues in light of the findings that need to be addressed for the enrichment of the programme and the enhancement of ECD.

The mother-child relationship

Foremost, in terms of the importance of the child in society, through focus group discussions we found that a family is not considered to be complete without a child. It should also be noted that cultural norms suggest that male children are superior to female children. In the development and welfare of children – these 'gifts of God' – the loving role of the mother is greatly emphasised. The positive effects of the mother-child relationship were visible in the results of observational data. The data show that given the limited physical and material resources of the home, which in most cases were severely constrained, it is the psychological environment created by the mother's interaction with the child, her behaviour with the child and her attitudes of hope for the future which were significant factors in the child's development.

There is a good deal of informal social support available to the mother, particularly from older women, who wield a great deal of influence on the

Despite this push for education, '... the first issue on people's minds is ensuring their children's basic health,' says Woodhead. 'There are serious resource pressures. As one parent put it: "Children can't play well if they haven't fed well."' Woodhead notes the conclusions of the study's authors, that the communities in Machakos District 'require professional guidance, information and ideas to support their efforts to build childcare/education environments appropriate to the changing social context.' He adds that there is an 'urgent need' to consider pre-school alternatives. Considering the closely knit communities, where traditional lifestyles and values have been responsible for shaping child care practices, he repeats the authors' proposal to encourage 'community mobilisation towards sustainable targets.'

India

The children of this study group were developing in an environment with very few material resources in both the home and day care facility. As Woodhead observed, in one particular crèche, 'There are no toys or play materials. In a community where adults have very few material possessions, it is hardly surprising that children have virtually none.' This was seen as placing constraints on opportunities for learning, except in cases where staff members were highly resourceful. As with Kenya, where two or three year olds are taking part in the programme designed for the 4-5 age group, 'crèche workers rarely have the time or resources to adapt the programme to their stage of development.' However, he says, 'Socially and emotionally, the environment is rich, secure and supportive.'

Although community support was credited for helping the mother in her role as primary care provider, Woodhead acknowledges the disparity presented by the authors of the study 'between what the care workers claim to know about child development and what was observed in practice.' He also underlines the gulf illustrated by the authors which tends to exist between mothers and day care workers. 'On the one hand ... there is considerable potential to educate parents and the community about health issues and child development,' says Woodhead, but 'the crèche workers are ill-prepared to carry out this task ... they may be dismissive of the potential influence of parents and they may underestimate their potential to influence parental beliefs and practices.' He supports the authors in their recommendation for enhanced practical training of the crèche workers, to reorient them in this aspect of their work.

France

The fact that the France study was the only study to successfully focus on a large-scale programme specifically designed to provide day care for 0-3 year olds, reflects the extent and range of child care

community. Overall, it was seen that the psychological and social dimensions of the community support child development, although negative aspects do exist. These comprise ignorance surrounding environmental hygiene, modern health practice and developmental milestones. Concern that these cultural negatives can reinforce negatives in the family environment is an issue.

In addition to the health care and the nutritional supplement of the midday meal provided by the crèche, the opportunity to learn, to play, to be engaged in meaningful activities and to understand concepts outside the realm of the family, have all been shown to fill the deficits of material poverty which exist in the home environment. The lack of equipment and resources from which the crèches suffer was not found to have any negative impact upon the children. However, it is important to point out that these factors reduce the positive impact that the crèche could otherwise have on the children's development.

Crèche workers' skills and moving forward

The crèche workers' concept and understanding of [illegible] and related perceptions, along with their programme planning skills, were shown to be significant factors in the children's development, and were perhaps related to the fact that all [illegible] caregivers are required to undergo formal training. However, discrepancies were observed in what the workers say and what they do; while their conceptual understanding seems to be of a high order, the application of these concepts in their work are not commensurate with the level of knowledge. Finally, the findings show that a number of the crèche workers do not value the potential role of the mother in the programme.

Thus, several positive factors are seen to have significance for the children's development and, hence, are able to mitigate the effects of material deprivation to which a child may be exposed. However, to improve the crèche programme in India, certain issues must be addressed.

First, focus will have to include the community in education and awareness-building, with the focus on the child and the child's development. Second, the findings imply the need for training of the crèche workers. Gaps between their understanding and implementation of [illegible] must be eliminated. Third, the importance of building up relationships with the parents must be emphasised, along with methods of influencing the mothers in such a way that they reinforce the efforts taken by the crèche workers (for example, in health, hygiene and nutrition) to facilitate the development of the child.

above: a range of beliefs and values shape the ecology of children's development (Kenya)

arrangements in France, according to Woodhead. The parent-run crèche is only one of a number of options. The study was also characterised by a focus on very specific questions relating to the implications of involving parents in the quality of their children's day care experience, especially where it concerned their intellectual development.

Woodhead described the study as illustrating 'the possibilities for bridging the gulf between the microsystems of crèche and home, institutional and familial care, professional and parental caregiving.' He observed that the *crèches parentales* 'transform the generally cursory "doorstep" contacts between parents and caregivers into a much more genuine collaborative partnership.' He recorded his impressions of the arrival of parents coming to pick up their children: 'This is the moment when the contrast with a conventional nursery is most clear – the parents are chatting with the "staff" as if they are old friends – but then they are old friends – or, if not, at least there are no status or professional barriers that might keep a distance between them.'

Also unique in Woodhead's view was the involvement of fathers in these crèches. 'In a context of family instability, divorce and single parenting, the availability of male role models, and male caring styles can extend children's experience, especially in view of the evidence from this and other studies of a tendency for fathers to adopt a different style of relationship and interaction compared to mothers.'[4]

Extending the findings

'We now have evidence from a wealth of (more or less) well-controlled research evaluations, which point to the impact of particular early childhood experiences on children's emotional, social, and cognitive development,' Woodhead says in concluding his analysis. 'From such research we should be in a strong position to make inference about what is quality.' To do so, he suggests, it is first necessary to consider perspectives.

'Any early childhood programme is a complex human system involving numerous individuals and interest groups. There are many different potential criteria of quality, which are closely linked to beliefs about goals and functions. These beliefs are in turn shaped by perspectives on childhood, cultural patterns and personal values as well as social structures, levels of poverty and wealth, etc.'

The key to making sense of the structure, according to Woodhead is negotiation. However, he warns, 'It is not about blending perspectives into an artificial consensus. It is about acknowledging how a range of beliefs and values may shape the ecology of children's development and the experience of an early childhood programme.' This brings us back to the concept of the developmental niche. 'Adopting the concept of developmental niche,' asserts Woodhead, 'encourages a more ethnographic appreciation of the place of particular care practices in the total ecology of child development, within as well as outside the programme.'

Woodhead takes the philosophy one step further, proposing that 'contextual appropriateness' be combined with 'developmental appropriateness', to result in the hybrid principle of 'Practice appropriate to the context of early development (PACED).' It is not an approach to be prescribed to care, teaching method or curriculum, he maintains, but instead 'identifies a process of contextual appraisal that must be undertaken in order to draw conclusions about the appropriateness (and hence quality) of child care environments, practices and approaches to learning and teaching.'

This alternative framework of thinking would base practices on local variations in children's experience, would take into account the age and individuality, as well as their social context, role and relationships within the family and community, would hold that children learn in a variety of ways, and would ensure that the teacher/carer's role is adapted to the children's experiences.

Setting and achieving goals

'The challenge,' says Woodhead, 'is to construct contextually appropriate quality standards that both (i) build on the child-rearing traditions that have sustained adaptive development for generations; and (ii) take account of the impact of changing social and economic ecology, rendering some traditions maladaptive, others non-viable, and opening possibilities for new forms of relationship, systems of caregiving, early childhood experience and learning.'

To identify five concrete goals, or standards, of infant development and four maternal strategies for achieving these goals, Woodhead turns to data collected from 12 communities in the United States, Mexico, India, the Philippines and sub-Saharan Africa.[5] For the infant: survival, attachment, personal hygiene, culturally approved social behaviour and learning. For the mother: training for an expected level of achievement, controlling to regulate the child's behaviour, sociability and nurturing.

'The territory of childhood is marked by numerous possible pathways to development. Unfortunately, professional practice all too often assumes there is only one pathway,' says Woodhead. 'While scientific research can offer some universal principles that can inform developmentally appropriate practices, much that is taken to be 'developmentally appropriate' is based on the particular cultural niche in which dominant, expert early child development knowledge has been generated. An alternative framework emphasises that practice should be PACED appropriate to the context of early development.' ❑

Notes

* *In search of the rainbow: pathways to quality in large-scale day care programmes for young disadvantaged children* will be published by the Foundation later in the year.

1. Bronfenbrenner, U. (1979). *The Ecology of Human Development*. Cambridge, MA, Harvard University Press
2. Super, C. and Harkness, S. (1986). 'The developmental niche: a conceptualisation at the interface of child and culture', *International Journal of Behavioral Development*, 9, pp. 545-69
3. Myers, R. (1992), *The Twelve who Survive*. London: Routledge, pp. 349-350
4. Tijus, C. et al. (1995). *The impact of parental involvement on the quality of day-care centre*. Final report to Bernard van Leer Foundation; Evans, J. (1995). 'Men in the lives of children', *Coordinators' Notebook* No. 16, The Consultative Group, Haydenville MA, USA
5. Whiting, B. and Edwards, C. (1988). *Children of Different Worlds: the formation of social behavior*. Cambridge MA, Harvard University Press

France: the impact of parental involvement

by C. Tijus, A. Santolini, and A. Danis

Charles A. Tijus works with the Laboratory of Cognitive Psychology at the University of Paris; Arnaud Santolini with the Departmente Carrières Sociales Institute *at the Technological University of Tours; and Agnes Danis with the* Laboratoire CNRS *of Psychology in the Development and Education of the Child at the University of Paris.*

The following has been taken from The impact of parental involvement on the quality of day-care centres *by the above authors. This local study, which focuses on four centres in Paris participating in France's national* Crèches Parentales *(Parent-run Crèches) programme, was unique in that it was the only one among the four case studies which centred on a large-scale programme specifically designed to provide day care for 0-3 year olds. It is also the programme with the highest availability of physical resources among the four.*

The *crèches parentales*, or parent-run crèche programme, began as a movement in France in the 1970s that reflected the interests of professional, middle-class parents, who were willing to commit themselves to actively participating in their children's care. A national coordinating organisation was established in 1981, the *Association des Collectifs Enfants, Parents, Professionnels* (the Association of Children, Parents and Professionals – ACEPP) which gathers information on the crèches, carries out advocacy work, and advises parent groups on how to get started, how to organise finances, how to work with the government, and so on. Today, there are approximately 1,000 parent-run crèches in France, where parents are required to spend approximately one half-day a week interacting with their own and other children. The crèches, which are all maintained by professional staff, are small in size, and aim to promote a family atmosphere: the target is one professional, two parents and sixteen children.

Multicultural curriculum

As Martin Woodhead reports, one of the goals pursued by ACEPP has been to extend the original philosophy of the parent-run crèches to more disadvantaged groups – especially to the four million immigrant families that constitute 6.9 per cent of the population.* The goals of this initiative are two-fold: to develop a multicultural curriculum appropriate to the *crèches parentales*, and to combat the widespread belief that economically disadvantaged parents are not capable of providing the high quality of care, attention and learning experiences appropriate for their young children. Forty multicultural crèches are now in operation, including the four crèches which comprise this case study.

In our study we have looked at how the environment of a disadvantaged child can be significantly enriched by a particular form of day care: the multicultural parent-run day care centre. As a basis for determining quality, we analysed cognitive interactions after filming the children, parents and professional staff of four multicultural day care centres for disadvantaged families over a six-month period.

The hypothesis was that children whose home environment is significantly disadvantaged in terms of cognitive interaction would benefit from interacting with other parents. Equally, by participating in the daily education activities and the running of a multicultural day care centre, parents from economically and socially disadvantaged milieus would begin participating and getting other children to participate in more complex cognitive interactions.

In our observations of the film, children experienced different sorts of mediation, different kinds of interaction and different types of responses from the adults. The parents found themselves in situations where they had no known routine or procedure either for completing a task that was underway or for helping the child. Their attention, therefore, had to be entirely focused on the interaction at hand: they had to be truly 'involved' in the activity. In this way, the parent is a kind of naive tutor, combining some of the positive aspects of an expert with the advantages of a novice.

The benefits of crèches parentales

The overall advantages for the children in the programme include the presence of their parents in the day care centre, progressive socialisation and more tutors. For the parents, separation from their children becomes easier, as do involvement in community life and coping with responsibility. The family as a whole benefits from strong solidarity with other families, a social self-help network that includes housing, employment, social services and a sense of community even outside the day care centre.

In terms of cognitive development, we discovered that children from socially disadvantaged milieus do participate in less complex cognitive interactions than those from socially advantaged milieus, and that the same holds true for the parents. However, the results indicate that parental participation compensates for this effect: the presence of other parents participating in the day care centre alongside the professional staff helps to create an environment rich in cognitive interactions. By providing diversity, this environment enhances the child's cognitive development.

Attenuation and compensation

These results are fundamental to child care and development since they suggest that it is possible to attenuate and even compensate for the negative link between a disadvantaged social category and the degree of cognitive interaction. Moreover, because multicultural parent-run day care centres group together children and parents of different cultures, they can be said to provide a very profitable environment insofar as they allow children to encounter different points of view on the world.

We recommend encouraging the increased participation of disadvantaged parents in the structure of the parent-run day care centre. We feel that this corresponds to the philosophy of the *crèches parentales*, which are not simply service structures offering aid and assistance to the disadvantaged but an opportunity to enable members of disadvantaged homes to take an active part in their own educational and social destiny.

---

* Combes, J. (1992) *Parent-run day care centres: the growth of a French community initiative.* Studies and Evaluations paper No 8. Bernard van Leer Foundation, The Hague, the Netherlands ISSN 0925-2983

Venezuela: perspectives and potentials

by M. Terán de Ruesta, J. Yánez and A. Tovar de Zarikian

Maria Carlota Terán de Ruesta was Coordinator of the Venezuelan Case study into the environment of the child, Jésus Leonardo Yánez was Associate Investigator and Amelia Tovar de Zarikian was the Child Development Investigator.

The following has been prepared from Environmental Quality, Culture and Child Development *written by the above authors. It is a case study that examines the* Programa de Hogares y Multihogares de Cuidado Diario *(Day care home and multi-homes programme) in the Venezuelan states of Barinas and Carabobo.*

In Venezuela in 1974, informal day care arrangements, which sprung up in response to the growth in the number of working mothers, were organised into a national programme, the *Programa de Hogares y Multihogares de Cuidado Diario.* In 1989, severe economic recession and government restructuring called for the reform and expansion of the programme in 1989. Official objectives re-directed the programme toward the children of unemployed parents under the age of six, promoting basic needs: care, health, nutrition and education. The reality, however, suggested by the socio-economic profile of the children seen in attendance, was that the programme, although serving over a quarter of a million children, was failing to reach this most vulnerable group. The *Programa* was again under government review in 1995, and is currently facing decreasing support.

The ecology of human development

Although underlying the premises of all four studies, Bronfenbrenner's theory of the Ecology of Human Development and its coincident micro-meso-macro-exo system is illustrated most closely by the research in Venezuela. The researchers have investigated the quality of the environment through observation, interviews and participative workshops. They observed the day care homes (micro), examined the various elements of the interrelationship between the day care mothers and the children's mothers, as well as the children's interrelationships with the two (meso), and finally took the wider contexts of the community into consideration (exo).

The massive extension of the Venezuelan day care programme has been successful quantitatively, but efforts to ensure the quality of the programme have been insufficient. In order to forestall the effects of poverty, work still needs to be done in particular on encouraging greater participation of the family, increasing the efficiency of the day care mother and the quality of interactions, and improving the environment which surrounds children in their homes. The study investigated the question, What happens in the programme that promotes child development, how does it happen and how can it be improved?

An analysis of the information gathered reveals a series of conditions in the day care homes (where small groups of children aged 26 are looked after by mothers) and multi-homes (where larger groups of children aged 0-6 are looked after by mothers) that contributes to the quality of the environment and, consequently, to the development of the children. A few of the positive aspects shown here also focus on points of intervention in the sense that they constitute potential opportunities for facilitating development that have not been sufficiently exploited.

Two different environments

Both the day care homes and multi-homes were seen to offer developmental opportunities through interactions with other children, with adults and with available objects. However, it is important to point out that the two types of centres are different environments, leading to different roles and expectations of the participants. For example, mothers' educational expectations of the multi-homes were greater: they believed their children were learning letters and numbers in this setting although this was not always the case. Alternatively, expectations of the day care homes concerned play and social interaction. What is lacking in general in both situations are guidelines that will strengthen the advantages of the multi-homes and day care homes and their structures and that will address the expectations and roles of participants.

Also, while both settings were secure and provided opportunities for development – in terms of adequate space, materials, and toys – not enough attention was being paid to the perspective of the child. The caregivers were meeting their own needs for organising time and space while the child's learning needs and opportunities for stimulation were overlooked.

The child should not be seen as just a recipient of services but as a negotiating party in the quality of their environment. The day care mothers need some help so that they can make better use of play materials, opportunities for learning and so on.

Mediating the effects of poverty

A number of features of the *Programa de Hogares y Multihogares de Cuidado Diario* in Venezuela also appear to mediate the effects of poverty. The mothers' close relationship with the day care provider, ensuring a safe situation for their children, helps to provide an important sense of relief and therefore to lower the pressure they may be under. The relationship also provides a model for important aspects of child rearing and could be a mechanism for further alleviating the mothers' psychological distress. The basic, nutritional benefits the children receive through meals in the homes are significant. In terms of child development, the gathering of several children in a home, especially in rural communities, compensates for the lack of stimuli and interaction that may exist at home. And finally, the strong sense of solidarity that the programme encourages – which even extends to the non-participating members of the community – has strengthened the programme and enabled its growth.

Yet, the fact remains that the programme could offer even more quality to child development if the areas of potential mentioned above were better clarified and structured. A training process for the day care mother, which focuses on these opportunities and ways of exploiting them, could contribute significantly in this regard.

The interface of theory and practice

Liana Gertsch, Bernard van Leer's Desk Officer for Asia, brings the perspective of the programme specialist to the Environment of the Child project. This article is taken from her paper *Following the Yellow Brick Road or Where do we go from here?: The Environment of the Child and Programme Development*; in it she shares and reflects on two years of personal experience with the project, hoping to stimulate debate about the interface of theory and practice.

Liana Gertsch participated in the New Delhi, India regional seminar organised to introduce Dr. Nunes' findings to the local audience. She recalls, 'My overall impression at the time was that the bulk of the discussion was on how various factors could mediate the effects of poverty on children, but that the question of why was less clear. In other words: What were the outcomes for children in poverty that we were aiming for?'

Dr. Nunes also delivered her study at an in-house presentation at the Foundation. During follow-up discussions, according to Gertsch, the most prominent question evolved into whether a significant correlation existed between early childhood programmes and the welfare of children later in life. 'This correlation – whether it existed, based on what evidence, and to what degree it should influence our programming in early child development – was something that warranted closer scrutiny.

above: various factors can mediate the effects of poverty on children (India)

'Many of our partners presume this correlation in proposing funding. When asked, they claim to believe in the value of paying attention to young children, regardless of whether a correlation can be proven. However, the tendency is still strong to justify intervention on the basis of perceived needs in the future, for example school skills, a strong command of language, showing appropriate socialisation within community expectations.'

Motivated by a personal interest in child outcomes and prompted by Dr. Horacio Walker, Gertsch attempted to analyse a number of current Foundation projects to see how they related to expected outcomes in terms of programme components. She found relationships very difficult to draw as outcomes were not always explicitly conceived in proposals or the intervention-outcome relationship was not well established. However, 'attempting to find this complementarity,' did help, Gertsch believes, 'in looking for ways to strengthen connections in proposals.'

Different perspectives

The findings of the four case studies were used to instigate discussions of quality in the context of large-scale programmes during regional workshops in the countries under study. Heterogeneity was a problem that Gertsch saw in these discussions. 'In an effort to reach people who potentially bridge theory and practice, participants who managed large-scale programmes were targeted. However, while quality was definitely a high priority for the participants, it is clear from Dr. Woodhead's paper and the exchange at the New Delhi workshop that different perspectives lead to different quality concerns. Moreover, some of the key concerns raised in Dr. Woodhead's paper were not easily applied. My impression is that locating the people and content areas which truly provide bridges is more subtle than we perhaps anticipated.'

Overall, Gertsch reports that the study 'led to diverse effects in the Foundation' just as local researchers 'latched onto the topic in very different ways, despite common terms of reference.' Since the majority of the project's events took place outside the Foundation, 'with selective participation by various Foundation staff', Gertsch experienced challenges in translating the experience for Foundation staff who were not present and in creating shared ground for reflection. At the same time, she says, the project was itself taking different analytical directions.

Impact

An exercise was conducted at the four regional workshops to reflect on how participants could improve their respective programmes qualitatively using a theoretical framework on quality as reference. Although Gertsch could appreciate the value of this reflection for follow-up purposes, she considers other elements more fundamental to her position as desk officer. 'The skills I bring to my everyday tasks – assessing proposals, monitoring programmes and evaluating progress – and the quality of the questions I am able to ask are most important.' Since her contribution to the Environment of the Child study, Gertsch feels that she approaches these tasks with a broader range of questions and experiences. 'The study has also helped to systematise my thinking on central issues such as child outcomes, perspectives on quality, the effects of disadvantage and potential mediators of those effects,' she notes.

But she admits this was not always easy. 'It has been a struggle at times to learn and apply the

BEST COPY AVAILABLE

lessons emerging from the Environment of the Child project. This is not an exceptional case. I believe that to apply research to practice and *vice versa* requires a conscious effort. It necessitates giving priority to the process not just on an individual basis, but at an institutional level.'

Practice and theory

Gertsch brings up the general point that practice in early childhood development is often seen as lagging behind theory and that many – if not most – ECD programmes do not explicitly draw on ECD theory. As someone in the interface position, 'this means finding the logic of a proposal whatever that may be,' says Gertsch. 'Once the internal logic is recognised, then it can be considered in relation to broader systems of knowledge.

'In terms of a local rationale, it should be possible to ask questions that open up theoretical considerations: are school skills a primary indicator of intelligence? How are the local rituals that celebrate moments in the development of children different from the traditional notions of milestones? What things do parents know that promote child development (instead of what they do not know)? It is easy enough to generalise about "typical" features of ECD programmes in the countries I am exposed to. The challenge is to ask questions that will inspire new thinking while still making sense in the reality that people experience. 'Keeping off the bandwagon of trends,' Gertsch says, 'is an important aspect of subjecting my own practice and thinking to quality considerations. It is tempting to follow the various cycles that theory and practice tend to replicate, but to do so would be to ignore reality.'

This illustrates Dr. Woodhead's point of making distinctions between perspectives, she says, and exposes the power of the Foundation. 'For an agency that makes funding available, recognising perspective and power is crucial. Unless we uncover our own assumptions and values about ECD and think critically about our own position, we run the risk of propagating programmes on the basis of expedience rather than experience and of disengaging ourselves from others' viewpoints.'

Dilemmas

In applying what she learned from the study, a number of dilemmas arose for Gertsch. 'I raise these contradictions without presuming to resolve them because they represent the ongoing dialectic between theory and practice.' There will always be new questions, Gertsch says. 'In answering them we will challenge ourselves to deepen our understanding.'

First, she feels that culture needs to be looked at more critically, especially the degree to which much social action, including early childhood programmes, makes claims to being culturally appropriate. 'What do we classify as a cultural trait?' Gertsch asks. 'In what instances are we really perhaps dealing with issues of ethnicity, or generally

Kenya: resources versus resourcefulness

The following has been prepared from The Experiences of the young children. A contextualised case study of early childhood care and education in Africa written by Octavian N. Gakuru and Barbara G. Koech. The study, which looks at Kenya, is especially interesting in view of fact that, until recently, child care and socialisation had been governed by powerful family/community structures and traditions. Although still strong, these systems are weakening because of economic and social change. The rapid expansion of formal education programmes has been seen as a result of these upheavals, including the evolution of day care into pre-school programmes. The National Centre of Early Childhood Care and Education (NACECE) and its District Centres for Early Childhood Education (DICECES) were established to meet the organisational needs of these changes.*

The totality of children's experiences encompasses not only their social interactions in homes and schools and other formal programmes, but also their exposure to the diverse and multiple contexts in which they live. As a result, child rearing should be viewed as a complex process within diverse contexts which invariably, but not uniformly, influence children's development.

The study to explored these multiple contexts and the various processes of child rearing. It attempted to bring together community and family, as well as early childhood programmes such as those of DICECE. Its intention was to specifically focus on the socialisation of three year olds and the allotment of resources within the family and community, as well as the degree to which formal programmes contribute collectively to children's development.

We found that young children's needs, while generally understood by caregivers, are not always met. Competing demands, inconsistent practices, missed opportunities and incongruency among available resources, norms and practices create gaps. The lack of nutritious foods, a high incidence of severe but preventable diseases and – despite the highly developed pre-school system in Kenya – limited stimulation appeared to be posing serious threats to the development of children in Machakos District.

More than doubling advantage

As children's exposure to different contexts of caregiving expands, the benefits of an increasingly complex and interactive network prove richer than the independent influence of a single context. It was interesting to find that children who enjoyed good environments both at home and at school, were more than doubly advantaged since the home caregivers became more interactive as a result of the experiences that their children brought home from school. Increased motivation and enhanced language capabilities in the child were seen in these cases.

Results indicate that material and non-material resources exist at the community and family levels. However these are unequally distributed, creating relative poverty and affluence not absolute impoverishment and wealth. These represent the accepted behaviour, or some other social phenomenon? What is it that makes these conditions entrenched and what is the margin for changing them? In particular, I am thinking of areas such as gender relations.'

To Dr. Woodhead's plea for programmes being 'culturally relativistic, not arbitrary,' Gertsch responds that the Foundation staff meet this criteria to a considerable extent. However, she points outs, 'Even within a cultural paradigm choices have to be made. The staff may cultivate relativity and yet come into frequent contact with absolutist positions. The degree to which we identify the line between culturally appropriate and culturally chauvinist requires continual reflection.

'Another dilemma relates to the use of the so-called "deficit model". Although it is understood as politically incorrect for ECD programmes to be designed around what is supposedly lacking, the majority of proposals I receive argue a case for intervention based on an identified problem (deficit), for example low school retention and performance, lack of confidence, a lag in child development compared to more advantaged groups, lack of knowledge about ECD among parents and communities.'

A provocative dilemma

Gertsch also describes what she sees as a 'particularly provocative dilemma' in trying to apply cultural paradigms. 'For most cultural advantages we see, there may be disadvantages we are not seeing, due to cultural familiarity.' As an example, she uses the Indian case study, where extraordinarily high cultural values on children were observed. 'While this is a very strong feature of most Indian families and one which provides multiple advantages to the children, what are the implications for women without children? If families are indistinguishable from children (and *vice versa*), what are the implications for children's rights which are also conceived individualistically?

'Thinking of the family, or women/children as a unit, we conceal the potential conflict of interests that exist among family members along gender, generational or other lines. We should not lose sight of these distinctions,' Gertsch says. 'By examining these contradictions and trying to resolve them, I have gained some insight into my own assumptions and how I might better underpin my practice and thinking in relation to early childhood programmes,' concludes Gertsch. 'The extent to which projects such as the Environment of the Child achieve this, as well as the degree to which they equip us to think critically, drawing on a range of knowledge and experiences, the better we will be at negotiating the intersections at which different ECD interests come together.'

---

context in which children are reared and shape their experiences. And important as these resource allocations are, it was found that the *utilisation* of resources, not the amounts available, makes a difference by creating or limiting opportunities and experiences for children (life chances).

A healthy environment conducive to child development requires a minimum, integrative package of resources. In some of the sites studied, families and communities were not seen as innovative in generating these necessary resources. In effect, they had not developed effective coping mechanisms and they appeared to be dependent, just waiting for assistance. Other communities, however, showed a willingness to work together to improve the quality of facilities and the physical infrastructure: they generated necessary resources, without waiting for external assistance.

Caregivers' skills

However, having adequate resources for the basic needs of children (for example, health and nutrition) is not enough for their proper care. It is crucial for caregivers to be equipped with appropriate social psychological tools and attitudes to be able to *utilise* the available resources for the benefit of children. Caregivers must have the capacity to accommodate equally the absence or availability of resources in order to adequately meet children's needs. Where this capacity is weak or lacking, interventions in the lives of caregivers and the communities to identify and encourage sound child rearing practices are necessary. Caregivers, we have seen, can develop additional cultural mechanisms and psychological dispositions which buffer the adverse effects of poverty.

In conclusion, we found that there is a general and, in some cases, urgent need to develop and/or strengthen the existing capacities of families and communities in Machakos District to adequately provide for the needs of their young children. Integrated health programmes must be initiated, focusing on improving the nutrition of children and minimising the incidence of preventable disease. Sound, traditional expertise should be incorporated with scientific ideas about diverse and multiple contexts as a basis for interventions at the family and community level.

Because there is strong pressure for the absorption of under-threes into pre-schools which are not equipped to meet their developmental needs, alternatives such as home-based programmes, should be considered to handle the care, education and stimulation of this specific group. Finally, there is an urgent need to promote cooperation among the various agencies that are engaged in the provision of services to children to adequately assist families and communities in meeting the needs of their young children.

** Dr. Octavian Gakuru works at the University of Nairobi, and Barbara G. Koech is at Kenyatta University.*

Network news

Belgium: new book around *School en Gezin*

The work and approaches of the Foundation-supported *School en Gezin* (School and family) project serve as a focus for a new book called *Pedagogische preventie: een antwoord op kansarmoede?* (Pedagogical prevention: an answer to disadvantage?) edited by Hilde Haerden and Dirk Janssen. The book includes an analytical chapter on the experiences of the project, as well as contributions from academics and practitioners about key themes related to the effects of pedagogical prevention on disadvantaged children. These include minority families and schools; and the implications of the pedagogical prevention approach for policy. *Pedagogische preventie: een antwoord op kansarmoede?* – ISBN 90-5350-469-9 – is in Dutch, and is published by Garant Uitgevers in association with the Provinciaal Integratiecentrum Limburg. Further details are available from Garant Uitgevers, Tienesteenweg 83, 3010 Leuven, Kessel-Lo, Belgium.

In the Israeli-Arab village of Mghan, the Foundation-supported MATNAS project launches a programme of creative work for children.

Cyprus: early childhood education and development in the Arab world

'Dialogue 95', held in July 1995, was a consultative workshop that aimed at enriching the Arab Resource Collective's (ARC) five-year plan for early childhood education and development (ECED). Supported by the Foundation, it brought together members of ARC's Regional Consultative Resource Group as well as practitioners in ECED and related fields. The report of the workshop – *ECED in the Arab world: principles and programme* – has now been published. It integrates the outcomes of the consultation into ARC's programme both to shape it and to achieve a sense of collective ownership. The report includes background material such as a description of the educational context in which ARC's ECED programme operates; and also sets out the 'holistic-integrative' conceptual framework that ARC has adopted. Finally, it presents ARC's revised programme for the years 1995 to 2000. The report is published by Arab Resource Collective Ltd, PO Box 7380, Nicosia, Cyprus.

Europe: development of local education

After a year of preparation, a European association for the development of local education has been formed come together. Called 'Adele' (*Associação para o Desenvolvimento Educativo Local na Europa*) the association was formally constituted at a general assembly of the founding members in Barcelona on 26 January 1996. The aim is to ensure that locally appropriate educational models can be developed in rural districts or marginalised and/or run down urban areas where resources are currently scarce or non-existent. The first president of the association is Rui D'Espiney from the *Instituto das Comunidades Educativas* (Institute of Educational Communities). Three other Foundation-supported projects – *Preescolar na Casa* (Pre-school in the home – Spain), Small Schools Project (Wales) and the Scottish Network (UK) are among the eight founder members from five European countries. Early activities will include promotion of the association to generate a wider membership.

Europe: network for the children of prisoners

In January the third meeting of the European Action Research Committee on Children of Imprisoned Parents was co-organised by *Relais Enfants Parents* from France, the Prison Administration in Heerhugowaard and Alkmaar (the Netherlands) and the Foundation. Welcoming 15 participants from seven European countries, the Director General of Prison Services in Heerhugowaard and Alkmaar, Mr Kees Boey, noted that two NGOs – Human Rights Watch and Penal Reform International – had published Standard Minimum Rules for pregnant women in prison, for children living with their mothers in prison and for facilitating children's visits. Participants discussed input into a draft document that will systematise information gathered by the Action Research Committee about numbers of children affected, their visiting rights, and innovative projects and experiences for facilitating their contact with imprisoned parents. Publication of the final document is expected in November and there will be a conference in Brussels in December 1996 to present it to national and European institutions. The meeting concluded with a visit to the local women's prison which provided opportunities for discussions with mothers about issues such as separation from their children.

India: 'Children in Charge for Change' workshop

CHETNA means 'awareness' in several Indian languages, and also stands for Centre for Health Education, Training and Nutrition Awareness. In March 1995, it launched 'Children in Charge for Change', a project aimed at ensuring that children fully contribute to, and participate in, development programmes. Among other things, this means that they must have the opportunity to express their concerns and thoughts, and share responsibilities and decisions with adults. With support from a number of sources, including the Foundation, CHETNA organised a workshop in December 1995 to clarify and crystallise the concepts related to these ideas, and to identify the principles that would help in the preparation of human resources. The 81 participants, all with expertise and experience in child-centred programmes, came from as far afield as Norway and considered a number of case studies to analyse the extent of this kind of child participation in various programmes. A questionnaire was developed during the workshop to both quantify child participation in programmes, and to identify training needs. A report has been published and further details are available from: CHETNA, Lilavatiben Lalbhai's Bungalow, Civil Camp Road, Shahibaug, Ahmadabad-380 004, Gujarat, India; tel: +91 (0)79 786 8856, fax: +91 (0)79 786 6513.

Oscar van Leer presenting the Oscar van Leer Award for 1995 to Marisa de Martinez and Emilia Mendez of the 'Children of Street Vendors' Project, December 1995

Oscar van Leer

It is with great sadness that we record the death in February of Oscar van Leer, son of the founder of the Bernard van Leer Foundation. Oscar van Leer had a profound influence on the present shape and direction of the Foundation, helping it to focus on the needs of young children in disadvantaged circumstances; helping it to have confidence in people's strengths; and helping it to hold on to the idea of empowering parents as their children's principle care givers. Through his personal beliefs, he also helped to keep alive the spirit of helping others to help themselves.

Oscar van Leer remained very active and interested in the work of the Foundation until the end – for example, in December he personally presented the 'Oscar van Leer Award' for 1995 to the Children of Street Vendors project of El Salvador.

The Van Leer Entity, of which the Foundation is a part, recently bestowed the honorary title of Founder President on him. This was to express its deep appreciation and profound gratitude for his creation of, and his numerous unique contributions to, the Entity. In doing this, it added to many other honours that he received for his work, including the *de Eremedaille voor Voortvarendheid en Vernuft in de Huisorde van Oranje* (Medal of Honour for Drive and Ingenuity in the House of Orange); *Ridder in de Orde van de Nederlandse Leeuw* (Knight in the order of the Dutch Lion); and Honorary Citizen of Jerusalem.

Jamaica: Satisfying the early yearn to learn

The Dudley Grant Memorial Trust has received the 1995 Honour Award of the Jamaican newspaper *The Gleaner* for its 'Operation START' project which is part of Jamaica's Basic Schools Evaluation and Revitalisation Programme. START stands for Start Teaching at the Right Time, and the project has the slogan 'Satisfying the early yearn to learn'. Work centres on an awareness campaign that aims to encourage the kinds of interactions between the private sector, the government and the wider community that will galvanise further action towards educating young children. So far, private sector companies have adopted schools and sponsored school feeding programmes and aspects of the public education programme. Meanwhile, in December 1995 the Minister of Education, Mr Burchell Whiteman, addressed a seminar held to reflect on a report containing the findings of a comprehensive study on Jamaica's early childhood education programme. The data was analysed and the report prepared by Dr Kerida McDonald of the University of the West Indies and Janet Brown of the Caribbean Child Development Centre. The findings indicate that a tremendous amount has been achieved in ECD since the 1960s. The report also offers detailed consideration of what needs to be done so that many more of Jamaica's 0-8 year olds can enjoy appropriate learning environments by the dawn of the next century. The study – *Evaluation of day care services in Jamaica* – is available at the Caribbean Child Development Centre at the University of the West Indies in Kingston.

The Netherlands: making a splash

In January 1996, the Foundation-supported *Samenspel* (Joint Action) project organised a swimming day for mums and young children and used the occasion to launch the book and video of its 1995 'Boat conference' (see *Newsletter* 80). One key feature of these publications is that space is given for immigrant mothers to express their needs and frustrations while looking to a better future for their children. The publications also draw together the results of the workshops/discussions that were held in five different locations in the Netherlands, pointing up their intensity and their significance for future work. *Samenspel* has also launched a new leaflet giving details of its current range of books and videos (in Dutch). More information is available from: *Stichting De Meeuw*, Postbus 57689, 3008 BR Rotterdam, The Netherlands; tel: +31 (0)10 486 3022.

His Excellency President Noor Hassanali, The President of The Republic of Trinidad and Tobago and Sister Ruth Montrichard Executive Director of Servol

South Africa: Ntataise Trust wins first Presidential Award

In December 1995 the Foundation-supported Ntataise Trust received the first Presidential Award for its exceptional contribution to education. This was for its work in the field of ECD. The Trust operates in five provinces of South Africa. It provides training and support to women on farms and in rural areas generally to enable them to develop skills and abilities for work with young children. The citation described the model of the Trust as 'unique in that it enables women with minimal education and no experience of pre-school education to be trained as highly skilled and competent pre-school teachers'; and goes on to praise the Trust's promotion of the importance of education in the early years. At the same ceremony, the Tshepang Trust – a member of the group of Ntataise training agencies – won the Free State Premier's Award for its ECD training work in four rural areas.

Trinidad & Tobago: Servol celebrates 25 years of service

In September 1995, Servol marked its 25th anniversary with a special dinner. The 400 guests – who included the President of the Republic of Trinidad and Tobago, the Prime Minister and many dignitaries – also enjoyed a video presentation about Servol over the years. Servol is especially proud of the influence it has built up in ECD with high government officials in the Caribbean region; of the fact that, because of its efforts, Trinidad and Tobago now has a National Council of Early Childhood Education that is fully supported by the government; and of the fact that funds for early childhood work are now becoming available from the World Bank and the Interamerican Development Bank.

Education in Scotland

The Foundation-supported Scottish Early Years and Family Network has helped to coordinate responses to a consultation paper from the Scottish Office Education Department. Their report, *Responses to 'The future of pre-school education in Scotland'*, reflects widespread disquiet about the paper's proposal to allow parents to select pre-school provision for their children and pay for it using Government-supplied vouchers. Respondents called instead for 'a national strategy that would encompass both the care and education needs of pre-school children and meet the requirements of working and non-working parents'. The report is a useful contribution to the debate about the appropriateness of vouchers and about alternative approaches. Costing £3.50, it is available from Scottish Early Years and Family Network, Floor 4, St Andrew House, 141 West Nile St, Glasgow G1 2RN, Scotland; tel: +44 0141 353 1710; fax: +44 (0)141 353 1443.

Award for Foundation Trustee

Foundation Trustee Mrs Marjorie Benton is to receive the 'Spirit of Erikson' Award from the Erikson Institute of Chicago – the pre-eminent institute in early childhood development in the USA. The institute provides graduate study and professional education for those dedicated to improving life for children; and is committed to helping children most at risk from developmental harm and educational failure.

The Citation states that, for thirty years, Marjorie Benton has operated in many diverse arenas using her 'remarkable intelligence and energy' to make life better for the women and children who are always at the centre of her efforts.

It also notes that, among many other roles, she has served as US Special Commissioner for the International Year of the Child; US Ambassador to UNICEF and Chair of the Board of the Save the Children Federation (USA).

Marjorie Benton has been a Foundation Trustee since 1987 and currently serves on the Foundation's Executive Committee.

Executive Director nominated to Board of Council on Foundations

Rien van Gendt, the Executive Director of the Foundation, has been nominated to the Board of the United States based Council on Foundations. The Council is an association of grant-making organisations of many types, including independent, corporate and public. It was founded in 1949 to promote and enhance the understanding of responsible and effective philanthropy; secure and maintain public policy which supports this; and support and improve cooperation among grant makers.

Rien van Gendt is already Vice-chair of the Council's International Committee. He is also Chair of the Hague Club – an association of foundation executives – as well as a Board member of the European Foundation Centre in Brussels.

These positions allow him to gather the experiences and ideas of other philanthropic organisations, thus influencing the Foundation and its work. Equally, his activities allow the Foundation to share its experiences and ideas at high levels internationally and thus have a significant influence in the world of philanthropy.

Report from the field

Mozambique: displaced children and customary traditional practices

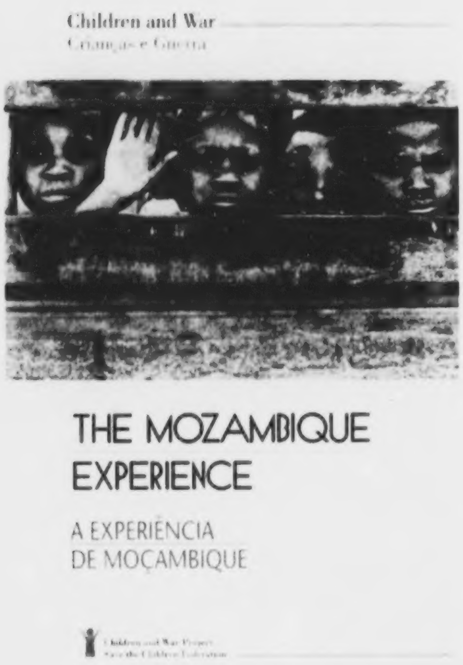
Agostinho Namade

The author is Director of the Children and War Project that is operated by the Save the Children Federation (USA) in Nampula Province, Mozambique.

In this article he describes and reflects on the work of the Foundation-supported Rapale Pilot Project that operated within the Children and War Project. The main purpose of the pilot work was [illegible] identifying, strengthening and mobilising local resources – especially customary traditional practices – to help in the work of rehabilitating children displaced as a result of the recent war.

It is now over a year since the Children and War (CANDW) Project of the Save the Children Federation (USA) implemented an initiative that encouraged the promotion of customary traditional practices to help children who had suffered because of the war in Mozambique. This arose because of the work of CANDW staff with rural communities and grassroots organisations. During this work, they had come to realise that, within communities, there are systems and organisations that are responsible for the informal education of children.

Most of these are based on customary traditional practice and involve key people such as ethnic group leaders, traditional healers, the elderly, traditional birth attendants, church/mosque officials and other respected members of the community. In the context of post-war Mozambique, it was felt that such practices could serve two purposes: first, they could generally help to prepare young people for life; second, they could offer a way of relieving the emotional stresses that the war had caused children and adults.



Children and War

Crianças e Guerra

THE MOZAMBIQUE EXPERIENCE

A EXPERIÊNCIA DE MOÇAMBIQUE

Children and War Project

Save the Children Federation

Working with pre-school children

The Rapale Pilot Project was rooted in the need to recognise, explore and reinforce these practices and consider ways of adapting them so they could be incorporated into programmes for pre-school children.

It was based in the village of Musassiua in the district of Rapale – a rural setting where families depend entirely on subsistence agriculture for survival. For most communities in such settings there are problems of sustaining pre-school facilities and provisions. For example, they are faced with the challenge of developing economically viable activities that can cover the pay of early childhood care and education workers, and the costs of acquiring materials, building facilities and so on.

Given such practical problems, one key way of ensuring continuity of the programme is to encourage local participation in all stages of project identification and implementation. One consequence of this approach was that project activities were run by a group of 38 volunteers selected by community residents. Naturally, the criteria used for selection of the volunteers were determined by the residents. They included:

- previous experience in caring for children;
- knowledge and understanding of traditional activities for children;
- interest and willingness to engage in and develop recreational and cultural activities; and
- time available to implement project activities.

Implementing, monitoring, analysing and debating

Project activities were divided into two different categories. First, there was a set of regular recreational activities – including oral history, storytelling, songs, dances and craft-making – and these were monitored by a group of volunteers. One difficulty was that many traditional activities had been abandoned because of a lack of materials: the project was able to supply the necessary materials as it worked to restore trust.

The second sort of activity consisted of sessions for analysing and debating the activities being promoted. These were held once a month and invariably involved the participation of the volunteers, CANDW staff, family members, community leaders and others who wished to take part. They took the form of group discussions about ways to improve the project. The main issues addressed related to the necessity of adjusting project activities to the needs of children and families.

In addition, there were occasional visits to neighbouring community initiatives promoted by CANDW that allowed volunteers to observe, share experiences and discuss ideas. The aim was not only to give them the chance to see other programmes but also to establish links with other neighbourhood groups.

Coping with family mobility

Activities took place from Monday to Friday in the afternoon. They were timetabled to fit in with the daily routine of community members ... but this was complicated by the fact that the farms of the majority of families were situated far from the village. Parents were therefore often away and for periods of three or four days at a time which meant that children were either looked after by older siblings or neighbours, or followed their parents. In addition, volunteers also had to take time off from project activities to earn a living.

To cope with this fluid situation, the programme activities were flexible: while the monthly discussions between volunteers, family members and others kept everyone informed about what was happening, and allowed changes and future plans to be agreed.

Benefits

At its core, the project enabled young children exposed to war to express their feelings and deal with their traumas within their cultural and social setting and in locally appropriate ways.

Crucially, because most children had been traumatised by the activities of adults, the project was useful in promoting dialogue and interaction between adults and children, as well as between children themselves.

More generally, it also helped to rebuild trust: when it started, people were very preoccupied with safety and kept children confined to their yards.

Finally, the benefits of the Rapale Pilot Project can be set in the broad context of the Children and War project of which it is part. CANDW's main purpose was the tracing and reunification of children and their original families. Such work cut across religious and political beliefs because it was possible to unite different groups with the common purpose of improving life conditions for young children.

Lessons learned

The most important lesson of this pilot project is that, despite the unpromising circumstances, customary traditional practices and resources had survived and could be used again for the benefit of young children who had been through every kind of horror. An example of the resources that were rediscovered included youths and adults who are willing to engage voluntarily in various activities.

On balance, everyone involved felt that the project was helpful in enhancing understanding of children's needs and potential, and then exploring local alternatives to meet them. The activities and the subsequent group discussions were important in developing greater awareness about the use of local practices; and in applying that greater awareness to the care of young children.

Pre-school children and politics

When the project started, children were engaged in different activities and no reference was made to the political affiliation of either families or volunteers. However, as the time for the first general election got closer, both political parties – FRELIMO and RENAMO – began campaigning, and both wanted to be associated with positive initiatives for children. In this context, the project was often invited to perform cultural activities at the administration headquarters that was associated with FRELIMO. Similarly, some of the volunteers involved in the project were also recruited to RENAMO to initiate cultural activities for children.

This demonstrates the importance and impact of initiatives for children on people's perceptions an beliefs – and how these can even be meaningful for political purposes.

The photographs that accompany this article are copyright Giovanni Diffidenti and taken from *The Mozambique experience*, produced by the Children and War Project Mozambique, and published by Save the Children, 54 Wilton Road, Westport CT 06880, USA

Conclusions

The general consensus by both CANDW staff and the community is that more needs to be done to support and improve the quality, accessibility, coverage and impact of these kinds of non-formal activities for children. One way forward is to promote a systematic study of the available community resources and initiatives for pre-school children so that proper documentation and dissemination can take place. ┛

Report from the field

Kenya: some realities of a community-based healthcare programme

Jemimah Mwakisha

The Foundation-supported Malezi Project is run by the African Housing Fund (AHF) and operates in poor communities in both rural and urban settings. Its programme aims to generally improve living conditions and to provide information about, and support for, early childhood development and primary health care. Work is directly with parents and community members – much of it in their homes – and is carried out by community members who are trained by project staff.

When AHF wanted a detached yet [illegible] view of the work of the project, it called on Kenyan journalist Jemimah Mwakisha to spend time with the workers during their training and as they went about their daily tasks. The result was a series of eight articles covering everything from [illegible] prevention to the battle to rehabilitate street children.

These extracts focus on some of the realities of operating a community-based healthcare programme among people who struggle to find the [illegible] day.

Working for health

Except for the chuckling and cooing of the two babies who clung onto their mother, the room was quiet. Ruth Muli, the teacher/nurse was at the board listing symptoms, causes, treatment and prevention of kwashiokor and marasmus (two forms of malnutrition among children). Her audience of 15 women listened attentively.

'How does a child suffering from kwashiokor look?' she asked.

Sarah Wambui, at 49 one of the oldest of the 'medical students', replied: 'Such a child would be skinny, and have a protruding stomach and fire-like hair'.

'You do not have to go to a supermarket to be able to feed your children a balanced diet,' advised Ruth, 'all you need is to walk a few metres away from your houses to buy maize, beans, peas, millet, sorghum and some *sukuma wiki* (cabbage). To protect your children from diseases you also need some fruits – bananas, oranges or any fruit you can lay your hands on'.

This session is one of many held at Muungano Women's Group Project in Kayoli, a suburb of Nairobi, where selected members of the group are being trained in basic health care.

Most of the families in the community of Soweto, where the trainees work, are headed by single women and are very large. Despite the moderate success the trainees have achieved, all agreed that the programme could do better if only those they visit have some sources of income and hence a better standard of living.

'Many times when we make a home visit, we find that the family has not had a meal for two days,' reported Sarah. 'It's very embarrassing to talk to a woman about a balanced diet when in fact she cannot feed her family at all'.

The trainees feel that they would be much better welcomed in the homes if there could be a provision for them to take some food, or some other incentive 'in order to make those we visit fully appreciate what we share with them'.

Making themselves welcome ... and effective

Meanwhile, they have developed other strategies. Benta Atieno, a secondary school drop-out and mother of four said 'We create a rapport before we get into the subject of our visit. And we persist because we know their health needs'. She added that the main health concerns are scabies, ring worm, malaria, sexually transmitted diseases – including HIV/AIDS – and kwashiokor.

How do they handle patients with sexually transmitted diseases? According to Benta, once they are convinced of the symptoms, they 'advise them to visit a clinic or see the doctor for tests'. They also tell women sufferers to insist on the use of condoms because many of them have multiple partners. As for HIV/AIDS, they ensure that the cases are dealt with confidentially.

Apart from the class sessions and the home visits, the trainees also work in the clinic with the assistance of the nurse. 'We shall soon be fully fledged doctors,' joked Benta, 'already I can diagnose and treat, something I never imagined I would do in my life'.

Low cost solutions

Sarah Wambui Mwangi has learned what to do about malaria: 'Before you get to a doctor, you can do something about the high temperature. Dip a piece of cloth in lukewarm water and place it on the body of the sick person. But the best solution is prevention. Use a net if you can and clear your compound of unnecessary grass or vegetation as well as standing water.' And, since buying a net is out of the question for most people, there are many clean, dry compounds.

Mary Wambui is satisfied with the service provided in her village: 'If we had known all that we have been learning about diseases and related health issues of late, we would not have suffered as much as we have' she states conclusively.

But a lot of the success of the health care project will depend on how much the standard of living for these slum dwellers improves. It will also depend on the general education the villagers acquire and how they identify with the project. This will enable them to realise that the health care effort is meant to benefit them. ⌟

Maarten's theory

by Dr. Elly Singer

Dr. Elly Singer is a pedagogue and child development psychologist. She works in the Department of Development Psychology in the University of Utrecht, and in the Department of General Pedagogy in the University of Amsterdam. She has done research and has published work on child care, bringing up children and the education of young children.

I'd like to tell you about Maarten's theory. Maarten is a boy of 13 years old and he recently asked me what I did. In reply, I told him that I thought about good ways of caring for small children when their parents are working. Because he looks after his younger brothers and sisters, I was keen to have his opinion. 'Well', he said, 'when looking after children you should do something that you **yourself** enjoy. Then the children come to you by themselves to watch, to ask something or to help. When they don't enjoy it anymore they go and play together, and if they need anything you just help them.'

working with each other... and a little support from adults who know the skills. Escolas Isoladas (Isolated Scools) *project, Portugal*

When I thought about his theory, I became increasingly impressed with the accuracy of his insight. I would like to tell you why.

Letting children initiate contact

Maarten said something that I know from experience and research: most young children seek company and want to do what adults are doing. If a carer models clay she is surrounded within a moment by a group of curious toddlers who also want to model clay. Research of children at home indicate that most two year olds spontaneously help their parents with household tasks; and Tizard and Hughes (1984) found that children of four years old talk with their mothers about everything that they do together.

However, Tizard and Hughes found that carers in centres generally initiated conversation with the children. They ask, for example, what the child is doing. The child answers, and the carer might ask another question to which the child replies. That is the end of the discussion. Tizard and Hughes found few real discussions in their research. As most centres are completely geared towards children and play, and the general rule is that children are 'active' there, the opportunity to talk together is rare.

Discussing something together is much easier if the children themselves initiate the contact. Tizard and Hughes found that the situations in which carers and children really talked were when the carers **themselves** were busy doing something and the children approached them.

Maarten was right when he said that carers should mostly do what they themselves want to do and let the children involve themselves in this.

Playing with other children

Maarten's second piece of advice was: let children play together. From a very early age children are interested in each other. Babies of two or three months are already aware of each other. They stare intensely at each other, have eye contact and encourage smiles from each other (Mussatti, 1986). Babies of six to 12 months seek active contact with each other. One year olds often exchange objects with each other. At first this is done without looking at each other. They later look at each other and it becomes a mutual game of taking and giving. Rubenstein and Howes (1983) found that the level of play of 18 month old children is higher when they play with other children. Children challenge each other and by playing together they increase their exploratory use of toys.

Adults have a completely different role for young children than other children. They use language and are motivated by different things than children. Although adults are extremely important for children's language development, young children do communicate with each other, mostly nonverbally. They are able to guess each other's intentions and draw out each others' reactions at a much earlier age than had been previously thought. They are also patient towards each other when making their wishes clear. Stambok and Verba (1986) describe how a child licked a piece of paper a number of times and then gave it to another child. After a while the other child licked the paper too and a licking game developed.

Children play 'pretend' games in which they create a make believe scenario. The 'pretend' game seems to have the same function for children as reflection has for adults. Toddlers and young children are limited by their lack of language in thinking about abstract things, so they use their imaginations and try things out through play acting. According to Vygotsky (1976) 'pretend' play is a predecessor to abstract thinking.

Four year olds share the roles amongst themselves and discuss the rules that belong to each role. They act out events that make them emotional. Fein (1989) found that the expressing of emotions such as tension, adventure or solidarity are the most important elements in the role play. For this reason some role plays are repeated endlessly.

According to Damon (1988) playmates are essential for children's moral development: sharing, making rules, comforting each other and fighting with each other help lay a basis for a moral code based on equality.

What carers shouldn't do

Maarten's advice to let children play together is wise: children learn from each other. Unfortunately in centres the relationships between the children are often undervalued. Carers and parents often think that only the relationships between the leaders and the children are important. But even young children need each other and should be able to play with regular friends. This should be taken into account as they may otherwise see 30 to 40 other toddlers every week and not know which of them are their friends.

Carers sometimes focus too much on the children, and think that they should always respond to their signals. These children can become more geared towards their carers than towards each other. When children are playing together it is usually enough for them to have occasional eye contact with the carers and know that they are there for them: this stimulates secure play. Attempting to give each child individual attention can lead to too brief contact between carers and children.

Although many people believe that small groups and a lot of attention from the carers are better for children, this need not always be so. Homans (1995) found, for example, that very active children maintained their interest in something when they played in the group better than when they had to share the play leader's attention with more than one other child. There are even studies that show that the smaller the group the more the carer interferes and the greater the number of children who show exaggerated bonding behaviour (Phillips *et al.* 1987).

Letting children ask for help

And finally Maarten's third piece of advice: only help children when they ask for it. Because the world is so new to children they have so many questions about which they want to think. It does not matter that adults cannot always answer their questions – the point is to think together. If this happens children will see adults as attractive partners for discussion. 'Thinking together' is something that Maarten and his brothers and sisters adore.

Looking for the key

On top of taking all of the above into account, carers have to arrange a programme for the children that is stimulating and fits their needs for eating, sleeping, learning and playing. Agreements and rules have to be made to make living and learning together fun. Rules give children a feeling of security. But not too many rules, warns Maarten, because nobody can stick to them. Too many rules are unsafe for children.

According to Maarten all children have a keyhole: carers have to find the key. That key can be anything: letting a three year old help and play with babies; telling a particular story because they know that a child is interested in a particular subject; or giving certain play materials to a child.

The continuous search for the key seems to me the most interesting aspect of working with young children.

Maarten is proud that big people want to read his story. ┘

References

Damon, W. (1988) *The moral child: Nurturing children's natural moral growth.* New York: The Free Press.

Fein, G. (1989) 'Mind, meaning, and affect: proposal for a theory of pretense'. In *Developmental Review*, 9, 345-363.

Homans, E. (1995) *Vluchtige kinderen in het kinderdagverblijf.* Postgraduate research in development psychology. Utrecht: University of Utrecht.

Rubenstein, J. and Howes, C. (1983) 'Social-emotional development of toddlers in day care: the role of peers and of individual differences.' In S. Kilmer (ed.) *Advances in early education and day care. III.* Greenwich: JAI Press.

Stambok, M. and Verba, M. (1986) 'Organisation of social play among toddlers: an ecological approach.' In *Process and outcome in peer relationships.* E.C. Mueller and C.R. Cooper (eds.). New York: Academic Press.

Tizard, B. and Hughes, M. (1984) *Young children learning.* Cambridge Mass.: Harvard University Press.

Vygotsky, L.S. (1976) 'Play and its role in the mental development of the child.' In *Play: its role in development and evolution.* J.S. Bruner, A. Jolly and F. Sylva (eds.). Harmondsworth: Penguin.

New publications from the Foundation

We did it ourselves - *Sinn Fhein a rinn e*

an account of the Western Isles Community Education Project – *Proisect Muinntir nan Eilean*

David Mackay

16

Working Papers in
Early Childhood Development

The scattered communities of the Western Isles of Scotland are among the most physically isolated in Europe. They have also had to battle for generations to preserve their distinctive linguistic and cultural traditions. The Western Isles Community Education Project built on the experience, commitment and resourcefulness of local people, and established an independent voice for young children and their parents in the form of a network of playgroups that continues to flourish. This book relates how, if we persevere, we can do it ourselves.

We did it ourselves - Sinn Fhein a rinn e (ISBN 90-6195-039-2) is number nine in the Foundation's Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections series.

We did it ourselves –
Sinn Fhein a rinn e

The rationale for experiential/participatory learning

by Kate Torkington

Underpinning the Foundation's Mandate are a number of principles which guide its work with children, families and communities. In the view of the Foundation, training in the participatory mode best complements the principles behind the Foundation's development work. In 1995, the Foundation produced a training pack – co-published with UNESCO – entitled *Enhancing the skills of early childhood trainers*.* This brings together an established content area in early childhood development with experiential/participatory training methods.

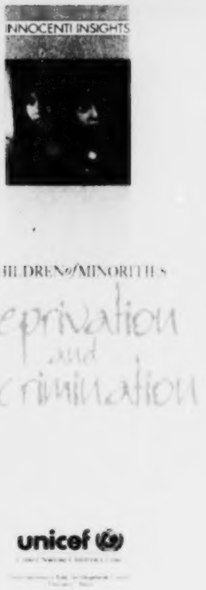
The rationale for experiential/participatory learning originally formed one of the elements of the training pack. It has now been published as number 16 in the Foundation's Working Papers in Early Childhood Development series; and provides both a theoretical justification for experiential/participatory learning and a review of the practicalities of introducing this approach in work with early childhood trainers. Its purpose is to encourage readers to reflect on and assess the training methods they currently use. ISBN 90-6195-0406

Single copies of these two publications are available free of charge from the Communications Section of the Foundation at the address on the back cover. A publication list is also available.

---

* The training pack is available from UNESCO Publishing Promotion and Sales Division, 1 Rue Miollis, 75732 Paris Cedex 15, France. fax +33 1 427 33007. ISBN 92-3-103130-9. Price French Francs 150.

Resources



INNOCENTI INSIGHTS

CHILDREN of MINORITIES
deprivation and discrimination

unicef

Children of minorities: deprivation and discrimination

This is the latest in the series 'Innocenti Insights' and it complements a previous publication, *Children of gypsies* (see *Newsletter 74*). The book consists of abridgements of the main discussion papers presented at a meeting in Florence, Italy in 1994 on discrimination against children and families of minority groups and indigenous peoples. These cover a range of themes including: children as victims and symbols; children and immigrants; intercultural education in Italy; and education and the indigenous peoples of Latin America. *Children of minorities: deprivation and discrimination* is published by UNICEF International Child Development Centre, Piazza ss Annunziata 12, 50122 Florence, Italy. ISBN 88-85401-23-6.

Child rights information Newsletter

The Child Rights Information Network (CRIN) has now published the first edition of CRIN Newsletter. CRIN was formed to support and promote the implementation of the Convention on the Rights of the Child, to help child rights groups get hold of information, and to support those groups in developing both internal and networked information systems. Production of the Newsletter is one of five strategies that CRIN is developing to support the coordination and dissemination of information about child rights. The remaining four are described in the Newsletter and include assembling a database of resource persons and organisations and a database of information about child rights; the use of Internet; and training for information handling. More information about CRIN and its operations is available from: The Coordinator of the Child Rights Information Network, Overseas Information and Research, Save the Children (UK), 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8RD, UK; tel. +44 (0)171 703 5400; fax. +44 (0)171 793 7630.

Parents as Partners

In 1994, the Foundation funded a workshop in Botswana on the theme of 'Parents as Partners'. The stimulus for the workshop was the recognition that parents in extreme poverty can become dependent on others for support in many areas of their life, including raising their children. The point of the workshop was to find ways of reinstating parents as their children's first educators. One tangible outcome is a report that, because it explores a number of key themes in a very practical way, can also serve as a valuable resource for those who are concerned with generating parental involvement in early childhood education. The major themes covered in the report are: stereotypes and how they block real communication; ownership of preschools and programmes and what ownership implies; cooperation and how partnership can be developed and sustained; and generating a network that will enable ideas to be drawn together. More details about Parents as Partners are available from Kuru Development Trust, PO Box 219, Ghanzi, Botswana; tel: +267 596 244; fax: +267 596 285.

Multicultural Child Care

As was signalled in *Newsletter 79*, *Multicultural child care* has now been published in English. The book is the result of a study partly funded by the Foundation at Leiden University in the Netherlands. This was undertaken by Paul Vedder, Ellen Bouwer and Trees Pels and considered the state of multicultural education in Western European child care centres. The book stresses the need for centre staff to develop sensitive responses to children and parents from migrant and indigenous families; and argues for discussions between staff and parents to determine educational aims. At a practical level, it offers recommendations for improving relationships between these groups so that consensus can be achieved. *Multicultural child care* is published by Multilingual Matters Ltd, Frankfurt Lodge, Clevedon Hall, Victoria Road, Clevedon, Avon, BS21 7SJ, UK. ISBN 1-85359-308-7 (paperback), ISBN 1-85359-307-9 (hardback).

Newsletter from the Mother Child Education Foundation

The Mother Child Education Foundation (MCEF) of Turkey is producing a regular newsletter that includes news and views drawn from, or related to, its Mother Child Education Program. This programme offers support and information to mothers and raises their awareness about child education; while enabling them to use cognitive training programmes with their children. The newsletter also publishes the experiences, ideas and reflections of the mothers who participate in the programme, thus offering valuable insights into the realities of its operation and into its impact. Finally it includes news and information about other programmes operated by MCEF. Further details about the newsletter are available from The Mother Child Education Foundation, Cumhuriyet Cad. No.18 Kat:4, Elmadag 80200 Istanbul, Turkey; tel: + 90 212 234 02 00; fax: +90 212 234 0106.

Bernard van Leer
Foundation
Newsletter
Number 82 April 1996

Text from the *Newsletter* may be reproduced or adapted without the publisher's permission, provided it is not distributed for profit and with attribution to the Bernard van Leer Foundation. Unless otherwise stated, all photographs are by courtesy of the project concerned.

ISSN 0921-5840

Bernard van Leer Foundation
PO Box 82334
2508 EH The Hague
The Netherlands
Tel: (070) 351 2040
Telefax: (070) 350 2373

About the Foundation

The Bernard van Leer Foundation is an international, philanthropic and professional institution based in The Netherlands. The Foundation's income is derived from the Van Leer Group of Companies - established by Bernard van Leer in 1919 - a worldwide industrial enterprise of which the Foundation is the principal beneficiary. Created in 1949 for broad humanitarian purposes, the Foundation concentrates on the development of low-cost, community-based initiatives in early childhood care and education for socially and culturally disadvantaged children from birth to eight years of age.

The Foundation provides financial support and professional guidance to governmental, academic and voluntary bodies setting up projects to enable disadvantaged children to benefit fully from educational and social development opportunities. The Foundation currently supports approximately 100 major projects in some 40 developing and industrialised countries. The dissemination, adaptation and replication of successful project outcomes are crucial to the Foundation's work.

Grants are not made to individuals nor for general support to organisations. The Foundation does not provide study, research or travel grants. No grants are made in response to general appeals. In accordance with its statutes, the Foundation gives preference to countries in which the Van Leer Group of Companies is established.

Administration

Trustees: Chairman: I. Samrén (Sweden); Mrs M.C. Benton (USA); W.H. Brouwer (Netherlands); W.W. Cross (USA); R. Freudenberg (Germany); J. Kremers (Netherlands); H.B. van Liemt (Netherlands); A. Mar-Haim (Israel); P.J.J. Rich (France)

Executive Director: M.C.E. van Gendt

A new member of the Board of Trustees

A new member has joined the Foundation's Board of Trustees. Dr Reinhart Freudenberg joined the Board on 1 January 1996. Though born in Berlin in 1932 Dr Freudenberg was brought up in Switzerland and has lived in Germany, Switzerland, France and Mexico.

After studying law in Germany and France, he worked as a lawyer in a German law firm before joining Freudenberg and Co. where he has worked in various positions since 1961. This enterprise – established by his great grandfather in 1849 – manufactures car components, non-woven fabrics, floor coverings, shoes and special lubricants. He is currently Head of the Management Board of Freudenberg and Co.

Dr Freudenberg has been acquainted with the Foundation for a long time due to his position as Chairperson of the General Council of the Freudenberg Stiftung, which is a partner of Freudenberg and Company. This charitable body was established to help the integration of foreign workers into society in Germany. It has since moved its focus from integration to tackling xenophobia, organising events and courses in schools to promote better understanding between Germans and foreigners and, in particular, refugees. The Freudenberg Stiftung and the Foundation both provide support to the Turkish Mothers and Children project in Germany.

Dr Freudenberg lives in Heidelberg, Germany, is married and has five children.

The Foundation would like to welcome Dr Reinhart Freudenberg to its Board of Trustees. ┘

Bernard van Leer Foundation
Newsletter
Number 83 July 1996

The rights of children 0 – 7 years

poverty and the associated lack of life's basic necessities militates against the realisation of children's rights

Following its adoption by the United Nations in 1990, the Convention on the Rights of the Child has been ratified by more governments in a shorter time than any other convention: by March 1996, only a very few had failed to do so. However, ratification in itself means very little: implementation is essential. The Convention calls for the preparation of National Plans for Action (NPAs) as a first step, and many have been produced. As a result, there are plenty of examples of new laws and procedures designed to establish and protect the rights of children. Yet, in general, implementation remains extremely patchy.[1]

Several reasons are cited for this failure to implement. These include: lack of resources; states that are in such turmoil that they have yet to focus on children's rights; problems in marrying the demands of the Convention to specific cultures; even the idea that asserting children's rights militates against the rights of adults.

Promoting children

But it also has to be said that the rights of children are still generally low on the agendas of many countries, perhaps because children tend to be either invisible or insufficiently important to many of those who have the power to effect change – and this is despite the Convention requiring ratifying states to report within two years on their progress towards implementation. Robert Myers finds that the Convention itself may cause some of the difficulties:

> Rights related to healthy child development do not seem to be set out with clarity in the Convention … (They) are much less clear and concrete, for instance, than rights to survival or rights related to protection.[2]

In this issue

The rights of children 0-7: how the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child is shaping programmes for young children. With contributions from **France**: parents in prison *page 6*. **USA**: creating a non-toxic environment *page 7*. **Angola**: children's rights in armed conflict *page 9*. **New Zealand**: changing family education *page 10*. **India**: the child is me the child is you *page 11*. **USA**: from village initiative to groundswell movement *page 12*

Network news *page 14*

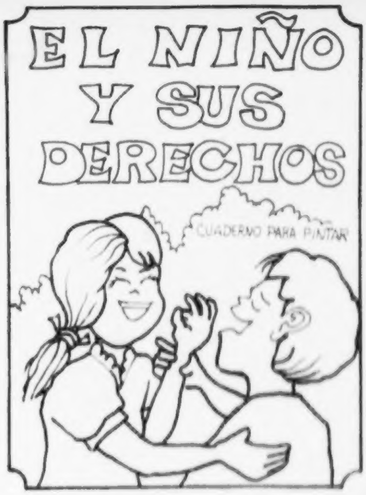
Reports from the field: **Spain** *A través dos teus ollos e coas túas mans* (Through your eyes and with your hands) *page 17*

Israel: Bringing something useful home *page 17*. **USA**: Bridges to the future *page 18*. Breastfeeding: a community responsibility *page 19*. **India**: Street and working children *page 20*

New publications from the Foundation *page 22*

Resources *page 23*

PS 026632



left: this colouring book helps to make children aware of their rights
Centro de Estudios Para la Aplicación del Derecho – CESPAD, *El Salvador*

Children's best interests?

Implementation of the Convention is governed by one overriding principle: that children's best interests should prevail in all areas that concern their rights. But it isn't hard to think of examples where this clearly has not happened: of authorities and agencies that have not planned children's best interests into programmes that impact on children; of actions by adults that must inevitably harm children; of parents who put their own interest above those of their children.

Projects that work on the rights of young children, including those that are supported by the Foundation, take this as one of their starting points. An example is the 'Mid South Family Alliance' initiative in the USA. It not only works to ensure that children's best interests are planned into programmes, it also sets out to enable some of the poorest and most marginalised parents to participate in the planning processes themselves. This is part of a much wider effort to make structural changes in current approaches to planning and decision-making about resources for children and families. For this to be successful, it is essential to change the attitudes of those who make the decisions; and to ensure that people who have no experience in working for change have their efforts affirmed and respected. (see page 12)

But even when children's best interests are considered, there are complexities and contradictions. For example, it is in children's best interest to be with their parents. But what happens when the parents are imprisoned and their children need to build or maintain relationships with them? How can access be arranged, and what should the nature of that access? The work of the *Relais Enfants-Parent* (REP) tackles a wide range of issues as complex as these. Over the past ten years, it has developed strategies that start by identifying children's needs, and go on to ensure that those needs are safely and constructively met. This has involved setting up formal procedures with prison authorities and generating large numbers of trained volunteers. (see page 6)

The rights of the youngest

Specialised work such as that of REP is important if the Convention is to have the impact that was hoped for. However, the work of Foundation-supported projects derives from a straightforward belief that children have a right to develop to their full potential; and from a well established working understanding of the development needs that children aged 0-7 years have. In practical terms, this means ensuring that the necessities for the healthy growth of children are somehow made available to them.

Projects also understand what harms healthy growth – for example: abuse; violence; poor parenting; exposure to ridicule; and racial prejudice. Because of this, they can establish how to protect children, help them through the danger, or support their recovery. Within this approach, issues that projects need to address can be clearly identified. Many – such as the rights of women; health care; and a safe and loving development environment – are the common currency of most projects.

Children's rights in context

But programmes add something extra to this. Most are operated locally and are run by people who have a very clear understanding of local conditions, and of cultural norms and practices. This means that very particular issues arise: those that derive from the actual development environment in which children are growing.

An example of this comes from the *Anau Ako Pasifika* project (Family Education in the Pacific Way) that works with Pacific Islander families now living in New Zealand. In developing a home-based intervention programme drawn from Pacific Island cultures, it has discovered that some aspects of those cultures seem to work against children's development needs: children are sometimes stifled and over disciplined. Because the project is run by Pacific Islanders, it can question this and can work to make changes. (see page 10)

Projects are also aware of the more general context in which children grow, and of widespread barriers to enhancing children's rights. One commonly encountered problem is that of racism and, as Louise Derman Sparks points out (page 7), children begin to suffer its effects at a very early age. Insidious racism creates what she calls a toxic environment that steadily contaminates children and leaves them with deeply rooted attitudes about themselves and others. Perhaps unknowingly, children may pick up a sense of their own superiority or inferiority and carry it with them for life, thus perpetuating racism.

Overwhelming forces

The rights of some of the world's children are so totally obliterated by the circumstances in which they find themselves that the most devastating consequences seem inevitable for them. Examples include wars; severe material deprivation; non-voluntary migration; cultural or ethnic suppression; and so on. Yet, even in such extreme circumstances programmes can be devised and implemented to mitigate the worst effects and then go on to help recovery. Such work will often depend on a close investigation of the realities that children are facing; the effects that those realities have on children; and the devising and testing of measures to alleviate the effects.

In Peru, for example, the Foundation is supporting work by the Rural Children's War Stress project of the *Centro de Promoción y Desarrollo Poblacional* (CEPRODEP – Community Development Centre). The project aims to investigate and enhance relevant resilience factors for children suffering from post traumatic stress disorders and, among several strategies, is training families to help their children by teaching them newly developed self-diagnosis and anti-stress techniques. Given the delicacy of such work, the project uses experts in the field, and also exchanges experiences with projects working in other countries to share knowledge and competence.

From Angola, *Watoto Wa Amani*, a Dutch foundation for the protection of children's rights, has produced a report about research into the effects of war on children. This focuses on the work of the 'War Trauma Team' of the Christian Children's Fund. It concludes that, even when many of children's most basic rights have been swept away and they are left suffering and traumatised, traditional coping mechanisms can be identified, revalidated and used with great success. (see page 9)

The girl child

Recently a number of countries or states have begun to introduce laws making it illegal to determine the sex of a child while it is still in the womb except when the unborn child may be at risk from certain hereditary diseases.

*Commitment to children: miles to go,** a report about one area of India, summarises the position of girls in many societies and cultures who have survived gender testing in the womb:

> Young girls are often left at home to act as surrogate mothers and do the household chores. Girls drop out from school as there are no support systems available. Families do not regard girls' education as important for either their future life or personal growth. Although both boys and girls contribute substantially to the family economy, girls do not get equal treatment.

Overall, the report makes clear how the developmental environment is set for the girl child, and how she will consequently carry forward expectations and attitudes which will impact in one way or another on her future and on the way in which she experiences it, shapes it or is shaped by it. The report goes on to spell out the action required, touching on the failure of the efforts that have been made so far:

> Both men and women within the context of the family need to be addressed jointly because they both make decisions about their children's lives. Adult education programmes have proved to be a failure and there is not enough pressure from the government's side for the education of girls. Compulsory and free primary education for girls is a necessity.
>
> NGO's acting in this direction need to identify the key problem areas and act on them ... Most of them depend on time-bound funding and fail to develop a long term perspective or to complement each other's work.

The key need here is carefully focused long term work, especially with parents, to change attitudes and actions at all levels.

* *Commitment to children: miles to go, the report of a sub-regional workshop on Rights of the Child in the Context of Social Development,* Lucknow, November 1994, Centre for Women's Development Studies, Delhi, India

Underlying all such work will be a drive to help families and communities restore some kind of normality to their lives, and therefore to that of their children's development environments.

Different base lines

All work for children's rights is affected and partly determined by the historical/cultural baseline of the area in which it takes place. For example, each state has accumulated its own collection of attitudes, norms and practices about children's rights issues, and some have left a more difficult heritage than others. Cosmas Desmond, formerly Acting Chairman of the 'Children's Inquiry Trust' in South Africa, offers an example:

> Historically, there were, no doubt, isolated incidents of child sexual abuse even in traditional African society but, apart from other considerations, it would have been physically impossible for it to have been as widespread as it now is, such was the network of support in the family and in the community. That network was gradually and often deliberately broken down. Until it is rebuilt, no number of conventions will stop child abuse. Tackling the problems of homelessness, poverty, unemployment, political violence, refugees and the other apartheid-induced ills of our society is as important – if not more so – to giving effect to the rights expressed in the convention as any solemn ratification of its abstract provisions.[3]

Realities such as these mean that countries like South Africa that are pushing hard to guarantee children's rights, have to struggle longer and harder to achieve success.

The girl child

Entrenched attitudes and behaviour also complicate implementation of many aspects of the Convention. These can derive from culture, survival strategies and unenlightened self-interest. An obvious case is the fate of some unborn or newly born girls, and the restricted access to education of the survivors. However, attempts to bring about changes have often foundered. For example, in one Indian state, this was because hardly any attention was paid to discovering, understanding and changing parental values, attitudes and behaviour – in other words, no one with the power to implement action took notice of those who make the decisions.[4] What is also revealed here is the huge amount of work that remains to be done on productively relating the underlying reasons for what people do, feel and believe to the day to day consequences.

3

Action against child sex tourism

Child sex tourism is a highly organised international industry, representing a powerful web of interests: the desire of some governments to develop tourism at almost any cost; the connivance of people in high places (including governments, the judiciary and the diplomatic corps) with lax attitudes, or sympathy towards paedophilia; and the commercial interests of some charter airlines, travel agents and providers of highly profitable local 'services' such as massage parlours, escort services, entertainment establishments, etc. In some instances, this is reinforced by local superstitions – for example: that sex with a young girl increases the life expectancy of an old man; or by notions such as the belief that younger girls are less likely to be HIV positive.

In addition, by providing fast, world wide communications, Internet has brought a new efficiency to the industry: paedophiles can now share and access information rapidly and relatively anonymously with little chance of the source of the information being held accountable.

Given the size and complexity of the problem, a broad range of measures is required. For governments, one incentive to take action – apart from the moral imperative – is a recognition that the long term costs of child sex tourism far exceed the immediate cash benefits.

In Thailand and the Philippines – two of the countries most affected – strenuous efforts are now being made to counter child sex tourism, and government efforts are complemented by those of NGOs who not only campaign against it, but also work with families and communities to ensure that children are not sexually exploited.

Elsewhere, some states are now passing laws allowing men to be prosecuted on their return from such trips and these laws are made effective by international collaboration between police forces. The next step could be international collaboration to prove intent to commit sexual abuse, thus protecting children from the experiences.

Child labour

Child labour is an equally complex issue that has attracted a great deal of attention and indeed legislation. But here too, the complex realities have sometimes thwarted the best intentioned efforts to bring about change. It is not a question of what is right and what is wrong: children of six should not be knotting carpets. The real questions are much more complex and subtle, and address such issues as: the dividing line between child labour and children gaining valuable learning experiences alongside working parents; the point when children move away from the best development environment that can be provided in order to make an essential contribution to the family economy; and the differences between proper preparation for adult roles and economic exploitation.

The realities of the children's actual situations also needs careful analysis. For example, if impoverished mothers have no access to affordable child care facilities, they may not be able to work. If they can, their children have to go with them … which probably means an unsatisfactory development environment and also carries the risk that they drift into working alongside their mothers. Here the 'Children of street vendors' project of *Fe y Alegría* (Faith and happiness) in El Salvador is breaking new ground. It provides working mothers – most of whom are lone parents – with a secure and rewarding place in which to leave their children. It expects the mothers to contribute some of their time to the centres as volunteers; and the mothers also participate in workshops that enhance their skills as parents. Beyond this, the project has developed very impressive programmes for the children and has recognised that these are a desirable commodity. As a result, the project is now operating highly profitable child care facilities for the children of richer families … the profits of which are used to subsidise the centres for the children of street vendors.

Making children's voices heard

Other programmes advocate for children's rights and they do so in very distinct ways. They also draw on a unique strength: that they work directly with young children and their parents and therefore know exactly what is lacking and what is needed. This gives them considerable authority as they monitor NPAs, spot gaps and advocate and lobby for more effective action. Not only that, but their effectiveness is enhanced when they help children to advocate for themselves.

For example, *Centros Comunitarios de Aprendizaje* (CECODAP – Community Centres of Learning) in Venezuela has recently completed a process of participatory education with children and young people about promoting and defending their rights. One outcome is *Somos la Esperanza: un llamado a la conciencia y al corazón* (We are the hope: a call to conscience and heart),[5] a book that records the actions, opinions and thoughts of the children who participated. It is now being widely distributed to draw attention to children's rights issues that have not yet been sufficiently well addressed.

Meanwhile, in June 1996 the *Los Cumiches* project operated by *Centro de Educación y Comunicación Popular* (CANTERA – Centre for popular education and communication) in Nicaragua, participated with many other organisations in the National Week of the Child. As part of this event, children aged 6-14 years were invited into the national parliament to occupy the seats of some of the elected representatives and to present their ideas about children's rights and how these should be implemented. (see page14)

Conclusion

Children's rights lie at the root of the work of all early childhood development programmes as an organic part of a holistic approach. Some children's rights work is quite obvious and direct, and sets out to identify, confront, mitigate and, where possible, correct the actual situations or problems encountered; while some is more general in character, and is designed to support the movement towards recognition of children's rights and the implementation of action to guarantee them.

Overall, a pragmatic picture is revealed, drawn from local realities, needs, resources and possibilities. Even in those families, communities and countries that have a poor record on children's rights, work is being done to help optimise the development potential of young children: to protect them from damaging events and circumstances; and to highlight the need for recognition of children's rights. As a result, models of effective work have been developed for use both now and in the more enlightened future that the Convention was designed to bring about.

However, it is now six years since the Convention was adopted by the United Nations and – despite tremendous commitment by many countries such as India and those of Southern Africa – the broad picture for the world's children remains bleak in many areas.[6] What is still lacking is a positive worldwide acceptance of the rights of children linked to a total commitment to ensuring that all children have their rights guaranteed: that the best interests of children always prevail no matter what the situation. ❏

Children and war

In the last decade alone, (war) caused the deaths of more than 1.5 million children, and over 4 million more became handicapped, some 1 million lost their parents or were separated from them, some 12 million lost their homes and some 10 million suffered severe psychological damage

From *Facts and figures 1994-1995*, UNICEF quoted in *International children's rights monitor*, vol 11/12 no 4/1, Defence for Children International, PO Box 88, CH-1211 Geneva, Switzerland

The Declaration of Amsterdam

In June 1994 a conference on the rights of children in armed conflict, part-funded by the Foundation, was organised by the International Dialogues Foundation, the Netherlands Committee for UNICEF and Defence for Children International. It resulted in the Declaration of Amsterdam which set out proposals for establishing and protecting the rights of children in conditions of armed conflict. The Declaration effectively complements the United Nations Convention on the Rights of Children by detailing the realities that children face in these situations and proposing a broad range of protective measures

The final report of the conference, including the official draft text of the Declaration, edited by Professor Dr G. H. Aldrich and Dr Th. A. van Baarda, was published in 1994 by the International Dialogues Foundation, Van Stolkweg 8, 2858 JP The Hague, the Netherlands, tel +31 (0)70 354 2864, fax +31 (0)70 352 3511

UNICEF's ten point plan

First call for children, reports that UNICEF has announced a 10 point plan to protect children in war. This takes a broad view, covering education for peace, conflict prevention, sanctions, rehabilitation and children as zones of peace. *First call for children*, No 1, March 1996, UNICEF, New York, ISSN 1014-9023

Notes

1. See discussion in *The International Journal of Children's Rights*, Vol 3 nos 3-4 1995, pp 295 - 307
2. Myers R, 'The Convention on the Rights of the Child: moving promises to action' in *Coordinators notebook: an international resource for early childhood development* issue 17, 1995. The Consultative Group on Early Childhood Care and Development
3. From a chapter entitled 'Human Rights' from a forthcoming book on the challenges currently facing South Africa
4. *Commitment to children: miles to go: the report of a sub-regional workshop on Rights of the Child in the Context of Social Development*, Lucknow, November 1994, Centre for Women's Development Studies, Delhi, India
5. *Somos la Esperanza: un llamado a la conciencia y al corazon* 1996, CECODAP, Caracas, Venezuela, ISBN 980 331-050-X
6. *State of the World's children 1996*, UNICEF, Paris, France

Resources for Children's rights

Childwatch
Children and their Rights: An International Concern

Childwatch the newsletter of ANPPCAN – the African Network for the Prevention and Protection against Child Abuse and Neglect; quarterly; ANPPCAN Regional office, Off Lenana Road, PO Box 71420, Nairobi, Kenya; Tel +254 2 726 794, Fax +254 2 721 999

Somos la esperanza: un llamado a la conciencia y al corazón (see page 4); CECODAP, Apartado de Correos 63171, Chacaito, Caracas, Venezuela

Children's rights through community caring: a collection of resource materials for staff training; 1992; Andreas Fuglesang and Dale Chandler (eds); Redd Barna Africa; Redd Barna Head Office, PO Box 6200 Etterstad, 0602 Oslo 6, Norway

The international journal of children's rights; quarterly; Kluwer Academic Publishers, Spuiboulevard 50, PO Box 17, 3300 AA Dordrecht, the Netherlands; and 101 Philip Drive, Norwell, MA 02062, USA

Towards a children's agenda: new challenges for social development, 1995, Save the Children, 17 Grove Lane, London, SE5 8RD, UK; Tel: +44 0171 703 5400; Fax: +44 171 793 7630

CRIN Newsletter; Child Rights Information Network, c/o Save the Children (UK), 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8RD, UK; Tel: +44 171 703 5400; Fax: +44 171 793 7630

Israel children's rights monitor; annually; Defence for Children International Israel Section, 43 Emek Refaim Street Suite 9, PO Box 8028 Jerusalem 91080, Israel; Tel: +972 2 633003; Fax: +972 2 631241; ISSN 0792 5042

Tijdscrift voor de rechten van het kind; Defence for Children International the Netherlands, Postbus 75297, 1070 AG Amsterdam, the Netherlands; Tel: +31 20 420 3771; Fax: +31 20 4120 3832

International children's rights monitor; Defence for Children International, PO Box 88, CH1211 Geneva 20, Switzerland. Tel: +41 22 734 0558; Fax: +41 22 740 1145

Sparc Newsletter; Society for the Recognition for the Rights of the Child, PO Box 301, F8, Islamabad, Pakistan; Fax: +92 51 220 576

France: parents in prison

a forbidding world and forbidding circumstances can be transformed for the benefit of children.

photograph by Philippe Levivier (REP)

Children have a right to be with their parents … but what happens when their parents are in prison? This sort of questions – and many others just as complex – arise in the work of the Foundation-supported *Relais Enfants-Parents* (REP – Parent-child liaison). REP is the only organisation in France to focus on preserving the bonds between children and their imprisoned parents working from both inside and outside prison. The following extracts are taken from a new Foundation publication *They won't take no for an answer: the Relais Enfants-parents* by Elizabeth Ayre, ISBN 90-6195-143-0. (see page 22) Single copies are available free of charge from the Foundation at the address on the back cover.

Telling children the truth

Through intervention, the *Relais* emphasises to caregivers and parents the importance of telling children the truth about their parents' incarceration and even about the nature of the crime. For example, in one case involving a male inmate at Melun who had killed his wife, the *Relais* psychologist accompanying the five year old son (who had witnessed the death) reminded the father several times during the monthly prison visit to speak to the child about what had happened to his mother. The child thus understands that it was not he, but the father who was responsible for the mother 'leaving'; he gradually begins to comprehend that she neither rejected nor abandoned him.

The *Relais* psychologists and staff have observed that children seem relieved when told the truth about a parent's absence. Marie-France Blanco (the founder and director of *Relais Enfants-Parents*) explains:

> When children are first separated from their parents, there is a real psychological and physical absence, a lack of affection and tenderness. If words are attached to this absence, the children gradually begin to accept the relationship in another form. They start to create something else and this helps them become more autonomous. It's a question of transforming the initial suffering.

Reawakening parent's sense of worth

One of the *Relais'* primary tools is the craft workshops in which the mother creates a present for her child. The present becomes a virtual bridge spanning the walls of the prison and is a wellspring of potential. First, the gift serves as a symbolic link between the mother and child. Young children need tangible proof of love; abstract concepts only have an impact later in life. When the child receives the gift, he or she receives a message: 'Mummy is thinking of you. She may not be with you all the time, but you are always on her mind, and she loves you.' Blanco gives an example of how a gift can serve as a link:

> Recently, a little girl telephoned me, overjoyed at the gift she had just received from her mother, a red and black dog as long as a baguette of bread. 'My dog told me that Mummy has not forgotten me and that she will be coming home soon', she said. When I asked her if she had a message for her mother, she answered: 'Tell her I got the little dog and I know she loves me'.

Second, the act of creating an object for the child reinforces the inmate's role as a parent. When a woman attends a workshop session, she comes as a mother, not as a detainee.

Liberating visits

The first few visits often take place in silence, and hostility is frequently palpable. 'The temptation is there not to continue the visits', says Blanco 'But, as time goes by, the parent and child discover that their aggression was shielding the need they have for one another, the love they are afraid to show.' Visits often liberate children in many ways. The volunteer[#] gradually allows the children to free themselves from the image of the parent they had formed in their minds and from the influence of the caregivers, who often turn the parent into a diabolical figure.

Initiating separation

A true separation is often not initiated until a prison visit takes place. Here is one account in which this was found to be the case:

> Two children, aged eight and twelve, are being raised in a foster home because their father was imprisoned seven years earlier for killing their mother. The younger boy was in his mother's arms at the time of the murder. To avoid subjecting the children to a traumatic experience, the child protection

service wanted to avoid any encounter with the father, who was urgently seeking to see the children. Going against the wishes of the social services and of the children themselves, a judge ordered that a meeting take place and asked the *Relais* to mediate. Hourly sessions were organised once a week for six weeks, during which time the children would be able to express their aggression through games, verbal exchanges and drawings. 'In any case, when we see him, it'll just be to say "Goodbye, asshole!"' said one of the children.

When they met their father for the first time, the children saw him in tears, exactly the opposite of what they had imagined, and they shunned him physically and emotionally. But the encounter was essential, according to the accompanying psychologist. Only then could the bond with the father make any sense at all to the children; it was only then that they grasped what it was and were thus capable of initiating a separation.

Neutralising negative behaviour

One of the *Relais'* main goals during visits is to neutralise any negative behaviour from the mother or father. Parents are often confronted with a dilemma: they wish to give the best of themselves to their child, yet they need to know everything about the child's existence, of which they are no longer a part. They pepper their son or daughter with questions, which upsets the child. The child needs to approach the parent through something tangible, something that is part of their daily life. As this is absent, the child tends to remain silent, which annoys the parent. Hence the necessity of a neutral presence to assist the parent and temper the dynamics. Alain Bouregba, a psychoanalyst and early childhood specialist who has been with the *Relais'* since 1988 explains:

A parent can become harmful in very little time. The despair and distress of being in prison can be translated by the will to hurt one's next-of-kin. Sometimes the parent will use the child to settle a family argument. The child has no part in this. The father often feels he has lost all say in his family life. As soon as he has a little piece of something – and the child can be that 'little piece of something' – he wants to grab onto it to regain power within his family. He can become very violent and harmful and drag the child into something that does not concern him. Here, you have to show great vigilance and, sometimes, the volunteer must be somewhat severe. You have to know how to make the parent tune into his or her child.

Society's failure to empathise

Society's lack of understanding towards children of imprisoned parents may stem from an incapacity to empathise: those who are born into intact families might understand that the absence of a parent may have an impact on a child's emotional and psychological development, but they cannot empathise with the legacy that this absence bestows on a child. An example of the lack of empathy is the question often heard during the writing of this book: 'don't you think that there are better role models for these children than parents who are in prison?' This type of reaction misses the point, which is that the parent-child bond inherently exists. It cannot be replaced, but must be taken into account, and salvaged and renewed whenever possible. This is the *Relais'* point of departure. ┘

---

* Most workers are volunteers trained by the *Relais*

The rights of children 0-7

USA: creating a non toxic environment

Louise Derman Sparks

Louise Derman Sparks is Project Director of the Anti-bias Leadership Project, Pacific Oaks, Pasadena, California, USA. Here she reflects on the ways in which the rights of children are attacked from a very early age by incipient racism in their development environments; and goes on to consider the sorts of anti-bias tools that can be provided for both children and those who work with them. She concludes with a review of some of the complexities of the work.

Although much of my work is concerned with racism, I don't automatically think about it in terms of children's rights but more in terms of helping development. But of course they are related. From a 'children's rights' perspective, the starting points of my anti-bias work would be children's right to grow undamaged and in a healthy and non-toxic environment.

Many children encounter racism: they are born in societies where the ideas of power and privilege and priorities filter down in all kinds of ways: from how the parents identify themselves and feel about themselves; from everything they see and hear; from how teachers and peers interact with them; and so on. So, the right of humans to be able to grow to their full human capacity without the toxic effects of racism is very important. It's parallel to the need for clean water: we have to get rid of the toxicity, so that children can grow healthily.

Early impact

And we have to start early: children in the first year of life already notice differences of many kinds, including skin, eye and hair colour, and gender – anything new. We cannot work on their healthy development without being aware of this – and we can go further and say that children have the right to grow up learning about diversity through receiving honest information … which means no covering up of very important facets of human life.

PLAYING FAIR

Playing fair: a parents' guide to tackling discrimination – *a United Kingdom version of* Teaching young children to resist Racism by *Louise Deman Sparks, Naria Gutiérrez and Carol B Phillips – published by The National Early Years Network, 77 Holloway Road, London N7 8JZ, and Save the Children, 17 Grove Lane, London SE5 8RD*

More disturbing is that, by the second year of life, they become interested in the differences, and start to absorb the power relationships and the discomforts that are related to different aspects of identity. A little later, by three or four, visual stereotyping is a factor. Then, by five or six, name calling is added. And it all has very important psychological consequences as children are developing.

These influences make up a complicated mixture. But it's also something subtle and insidious: it's not that parents say 'Well you have white skin, therefore you are superior'; or that they leave their children afraid and biased by saying 'I want you to know this about Native Americans'.

The converse is equally subtle: parents want their children to feel good about them so they don't want to have to sit their children on their knees and say that there are going to be people in their city who won't like them; nor do they want to tell them that their schoolmates are going to call them names. Parents often avoid telling their children about these things but, as early as three or four, the kids start feeling that there's tension around anyway.

Micro contaminants and what to do about them

For me, the damage is done by what Dr Chester Pierce – an African American professor at Harvard University – called the 'micro contaminants' of racism.[1] These include incidents that provoke discomfort, fear, anxiety or dislike, or the feeling that somehow 'who I am is not okay or superior'. There's a steady absorption of these: one incident doesn't hurt but, like lead in the body, the incidents build up to poison children.

However, even though these contaminants add up, their effect can be mediated by how families help children feel about themselves; how families teach children about unfairness or racial prejudice; what kind of resources families have in general; and whether families allow teachers to play their part.

What children think, feel and believe

I believe that children have a strong sense of fairness and empathy, it's part of the human condition, part of survival – but I have to admit that this view is based only on a lot of anecdotal evidence. However, in training courses, I have asked people to go back to their childhood. What I see is that they didn't realise what was happening to them at the time and so have never realised how it shaped or affected them.

More directly, in my work with children of four to five years it's easy to see examples of how damage is unconscious. But it shows up in environments that encourage children to voice it. For example, in some anti-bias work I was doing, a child of four and a half years explained to one of three and a half years 'It's not OK to say "OK José"'; and the reason the child said this was because he felt that it put down Mexican children.

This shows that, not only can children pick up on bias against themselves but they can also react to bias against others. This may not be automatic: the desire is there but tools are necessary to help them do it, as are appropriate interventions by adults who see the whole picture. For instance, in one class a new calender arrived that contained pictures of children. However, it only featured white children and the children in the class immediately noticed that it did not reflect their own experience. With the teacher's help, they wrote to the manufacturer to ask for an explanation. When they didn't get an answer, the teacher helped them to put together a petition protesting at the racial bias shown. That worked and the manufacturer promised to think more carefully about the next calender. These kinds of activities teach children tools for dealing with issues and also help them to understand processes.

Taking the right actions

Anti-bias work is complicated by many things, not least by multicultural issues. For example, just because children have a sense of right and wrong, it doesn't mean that they are always capable of taking the right actions. But to approach that problem, we have to develop strategies that take account of what their culture says is appropriate or inappropriate behaviour. In practice this means that we have to negotiate with cultural groups and families about rules for children as they interact with peers and adults.

There are even complications in determining which actions or reactions are right or wrong. For example, if a child calls another child 'Nigger!'[2] and that child responds with violent action, how do you tease out who was wrong to do what? Is it OK to defend your right to respect for your identity as an African American by abusing another child's right by hitting him? This leads into a very big discussion about how you can develop a strong identity if you are powerless to fend off things that are hurtful to you. ┘

---

[1] Pierce C (1980) 'Social trace contaminants: subtle indicators of racism' in *Television and social behaviour: beyond violence and children*. Erlbaum publishers, Hillside NJ, USA.

[2] A highly pejorative term of abuse particularly used against African Americans and others.

Angola: children's rights in armed conflict

Joke Oranje

In February 1996, Watoto Wa Amani, a Dutch foundation for the protection of the rights of children in armed conflict, visited Angola to report on research carried out by the Foundation-supported War Trauma Team (WTT) of the Christian Children's Fund. WTT's objective was to increase the capacity of adults to help children – many of whom have been institutionalised – to cope with the effects of war stress.

In this article, the President of Watoto Wa Amani draws on the report to describe some of the ways in which children's rights were sacrificed to the war and shows the kind of rehabilitation work that has been successfully used with the children and their families and communities.

First Call for Children

50 years later, a terrible symmetry

unicef

above: First call for children *is UNICEF's quarterly newsletter about children's rights issues*

Various wars have exploded on the African continent in the last decades and one country that has been severely affected is Angola. Here the exposure of children to situations of violence has been considerable and, through that exposure in all its various forms and through the war itself, children's rights have been swept aside. How is all this being assessed and how can we discover its impact on the behaviour and resilience of children? Which methods are important in overcoming consequences such as apathy, aggressiveness and the lack of future perspectives? These are some of the questions that the War Trauma Team of the Christian Children's Fund tried to answer with 200 children from war zones and 170 adults who work with them.

Children's exposure to war was assessed by collecting their experiences of such traumatic events as: loss of family; exposure to combat; violence; living as refugees; and enforced long journeys.

The impact on children

However, children respond and are affected in different ways to such experiences. Therefore WTT proceeded to measure the impact of these experiences on the children. In doing so, it considered three main aspects: the range of stress reactions, the frequency of those reactions, and the children's perceptions of their future.

It was found that 91 per cent of the children presented three or more of the eight symptoms of stress that feature in a *Disturbios Pos-Traumaticos* (Post Traumatic Stress Disorder) measurement tool developed from the Magne Raundalen scale.* These symptoms include: intrusive images; frequent thoughts about what happened; insomnia and nightmares; fear and insecurity; psychosomatic symptoms; and loss of future perspective.

How adults see the impact on children

The second way in which the impact on children was assessed was to interview adults. One third of the adults responded that children of war are isolated, reserved, introverted. Others said they are not. A large number considered that the children are sad without a direct reason. Almost three quarters of the adults confirmed that children suffer from psychosomatic pains and dizziness. They report that they show fear and insecurity, and tend to panic. Half of them have no confidence in adults and find it difficult to believe them.

Adults also report something positive: that most of the children talk frequently about what happened during the war, which clearly helps to exteriorise their sorrow and suffering and alleviate the pain. They play war games, showing aggressive behaviour and violence … but they also play normally with other children.

However, the children are easily distracted and half of the adults report nervousness, over-activity, disinterest in their surroundings and lack of orientation. Most adults report that these children suffer from insomnia and have bad dreams; 35 per cent of the adults reported that children wet their bed.

Analysing drawings

The third method of measuring the impact of war was by analysis of children's drawings: 40 per cent of the drawings are about the war and they include all kinds of details. Some pictures are mixed: war on one side and a house and flowers reflecting peace on the other. There are extremely powerful images – parts of the bodies, mothers being hung, bloody wounds, bombs falling on houses, mines exploding, and so on.

Therapeutic measures

Once WTT had completed its research into children's exposure to war and its impact on them, it could develop instruments to diminish the psychological effects of trauma. Via seminars with people who worked with war affected children and more direct work, the WTT team has developed special rituals that suit the Angolan situation and tradition. Two kinds have proved important: mourning rituals and caressing rituals.

The mourning rituals are very important in helping children to disclose hidden memories – something that is essential because children who do not talk about the loved person they lost can quickly become unable to express their feelings and this can become permanent. Traditionally, mourning rituals used at funerals keep evil spirits away. Without them, children report being visited at night by the spirit of their father or mother and they feel guilty, remembering them in silence, privately. Taking them through the traditional mourning ritual sets them free to do things and care for themselves, protected by the memory of the beloved.

Caressing rituals have always been passed naturally on from generation to generation but these tend to be lost in institutions or when people are dislocated. The seminars therefore paid special attention to recalling and reviving the caring rituals in order to transmit tenderness to children who do not have a family of their own

The problems of the adults

The seminars revealed a very important factor that prevented a natural cure of war trauma: the adults themselves avoided thinking and speaking about war. They forced themselves to be strong and, in doing so, tended to become reserved and aggressive towards other adults and towards children.

Frequent conflicts resulted. After discussion, the adults understood that, in order to help their children cope with the stress of war, they had to learn ways to solve their daily conflicts with non violent methods and attitudes, thus assuring a peaceful environment and future for their children. In this way, the suffering of the children serves as an important instrument to teach the adults to overcome the effects of conflict … and maybe to prevent new wars.

Conclusions

The work of WTT has revealed that, even when many of children's most basic rights have been swept away and they are left suffering and traumatised, traditional coping mechanisms can be identified, revalidated and used with great success. ❑

This article is Copyright Watoto Wa Amani

---

* For more information about this approach, see 'Children and the stresses of war' in *War, violence and children in Uganda*, Dodge CP and Raundalen M (eds) 1995; Norwegian University Press, ISBN 82-00-18408-0

New Zealand: changing family education

Teupoko Morgan, Director of *Anau Ako Pasifika*

In New Zealand communities there is much support for the general rights and well-being of young children and services are being provided. But we in the *Anau Ako Pasifika* project find it necessary to concentrate on the particular child rights issues that arise in our culture. Also, families of Pacific Islands origin rely on the support of the extended family network to help solve the problems that do arise with their children. 'We need to sort out our own problem' is a commonly expressed notion among families.

Cultural norms

In Pacific Islands parenting, however, we believe that there is considerable formality and over-strict discipline, and that parents expect far too much from their children. For example, observance of the protocol towards guests and visitors is an important aspect of our culture. But when homes are made shiny and clean for visitors, the needs of children diminish in importance and become secondary. We can and do ask questions about the appropriateness of such formality, discipline and expectations.

These issues are tackled through the work of Home Tutors from the project. Parents benefit from the exchanges of viewpoints on discipline, learn about reinforcing self-esteem and gain new insights into children's play. To complement this, taking part in Parent Support Group discussions helps to boost the morale of mothers as they come to terms with changing their ideas and behaviour.

In some cases, we also encounter neglect of children. It is difficult to determine whether children are neglected because their parents are simply not doing their jobs, or because the low socio-economic status of the family so overwhelms the parents with the problems of coping with life that they simply cannot look after their children properly.

The project can't solve poverty but it can take action to alleviate some of its effects. For example, many of the larger families have difficulty in meeting medical costs for their babies. In this case, the Home Tutors can ease immediate concerns by providing transport to the – often distant – medical centre where free treatment is available.

Guaranteed rights

As might be expected, where spiritual, social and economic circumstances provide a positive and secure environment for Pacific Island families, the rights and well-being of children are guaranteed, and extended families openly demonstrate their love, pride and support for young children.

This underlines the fact that we Pacific Islanders prefer to seek support and advice from within our cultural group.

India: the child is me, the child is you

Brinda Singh

The author is Chairperson of the Mobile Creches project, New Delhi, India. In this article she describes the realities of working with some of the most marginalised families in India, and discusses how to approach children's rights issues via practical support, value systems and entering the world of children.

The Child is mother, father
The Child is past, present and future
The Child is me, the Child is you
Manchild! Womanchild!
Arise out of your waking sleep
Heed the cries of the Child.

Children must have a right to all that has been laid down in the Convention. The problem lies in committing ourselves to making this dream a reality: we need a greater political will to make the children of our country the focus of our development efforts. At the same time, in a country like India, one is confronted with another harsh reality: how does one talk about Children's Rights where the most basic human rights are inaccessible to 75 percent of the adult population?

Mobile Creches has worked with children of migrant construction workers for 27 years. We set up creches-cum-schools on construction sites where we provide learning opportunities along with a health and nutrition programme for children in the age group 0-12 years.

These families are typically amongst the poorest in our country. They have come from rural areas, where they were either landless labourers or had very small land holdings that are no longer economically viable. Their circumstances forced them to come to the cities to work as unskilled construction workers on daily wages. They live in cramped make-shift huts, often on the construction sites, with no civic amenities, no sanitation, no electricity, and no schools or health services. They are also migrant workers and not potential vote banks, so no politicians or government officials care about their existence.

Without Mobile Creches, the children would grow up wandering on the construction site, with large and deep earth pits and scaffolding as their play material. Since both parents work on the construction site, five year old children take on adult responsibilities such as fetching water and firewood, and looking after the family's meagre belongings and even younger siblings.

The value of a value system

We at Mobile Creches have learnt over the years that it is not plenty that keeps families together but a strong and well rooted value system. We also have learnt that, at the end of the day, it is not the much touted minimum standard of living that holds people in good stead in their adult life, but self belief. These values of integrity, honesty and a certain self-discipline are put to the test every single waking day, as children and their parents keep resisting temptations such as taking what does not belong to them. We have tried to incorporate and affirm these values in our programmes with the children and the communities that we work with.

How to help children weather the storm

One of our biggest challenges is to provide the space for children to explore their creativity and to build on their potential. We partly do this by concentrating on helping the children we interact with to build a sense of self-worth. Where there is self-worth, there is confidence. And where there is confidence, we feel that there will be an inquiring mind. From such children will grow adults who will be able to challenge wrong and demand what is right. From here, hopefully, will start a fight for basic Human Rights, which will obviously include Children's Rights.

We also encourage and nurture the children's existing sense of responsibility towards their families and communities. All around us we see children from privileged homes growing up with a depleting sense of responsibility. The 'I for me' culture that is fast becoming the norm, at least in urban areas, is proving to be disastrous for this planet. At Mobile Creches we are trying to stimulate an understanding that we can no longer be competitive individualists, but interdependent beings whose future lies in local and even global communities, tied by the bonds of humanity and humaneness.

Entering the world of children

In order for us to understand the world of children, we thought that it was important to enter their world. We put ourselves through a series of workshops and 'became' children during those days and experienced what adults do to children, sometimes consciously and sometimes unconsciously. We

understood through this the power play that adults often resort to and recognised their lack of understanding and trust in children. Instead, we realised that children are more than capable of finding solutions to most problems.

We also learnt something that came as a shock to all of us: we learnt of the pain of childhood that all of us carried and which lay buried in our hearts and minds. As part of the workshop design, we were asked to share with the group any joyous experience that we may have had, any questions that troubled us, our dreams and aspirations and any experience that hurt us deeply. Ninety five percent of the group members talked only about the pain of childhood.

These experiences gave us an awesome sense of how critical the influence of adults is on the development of children … and then we had to move away from the ambiguous space that separates awareness from action. We began by recognising **that entering the world of even a very informal set-up, such as a Mobile Creches centre, still means entering a social-world which is new and alien for young children. They have to deal with feelings of insecurity and humility, jealousy and envy, pride and confidence. We have to handle these emotions and feelings with great sensitivity.**

We also included this new understanding in our training programme with parents. Young children were encouraged to share information on diarrhoea control, anaemia, etc with adults at formal group meetings. The parents sat with incredulous faces watching and listening to a five year old talk with confidence and ease to a group of 25 adults.

Our work with children has taught us humility, compassion, love, respect and an understanding that whatever we are doing today is for the tomorrow that we may not see, but which our children will. Can we make that tomorrow something that we can all be proud of? ┘

The rights of children 0-7

USA: from village initiative to groundswell movement

This article is based on a telephone interview with Sara A Sneed, Senior Programme Manager of the Foundation for the Mid South (FMS). FMS works in the states of Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi, launching and/or funding local initiatives to enhance the lives, and social and economic environments of some of the poorest, most marginalised families in the USA.

Here the author discusses wide scale, systemic change work that is drawn from local concerns and realities and that builds on the local and region wide networks that can be identified and energised, then describes how locally determined, independent initiatives can catalyse a powerful and widespread force for change.

The Foundation for the Mid South believes that children have the right to develop to their full potential. However, throughout the states of Arkansas, Louisiana and Mississippi, declining family incomes, rising poverty, family disintegration, lack of access to health care, homelessness, substance abuse, and the reality and fear of violence exert immense pressures on parents and young children.

Compounding this is a fragmented child and family service delivery system that often does not provide a good match between the support that families need and the services that are available. Cumulatively, these factors work against the realisation of children's rights, and diminish the likelihood that parents can achieve their hopes and aspirations for their children.

Given the size and nature of these problems, wide scale and deep reaching initiatives are necessary to effect change. FMS's response to this is the creation and operation of the Mid South Family Alliance (MSFA). MSFA works as a partner with communities that can envision a better future for their families and children. It is made up of people who come together to look at children's rights and needs and to rethink some of the traditional structures and approaches that have been put in place to support children, families and women.

MSFA helps to build and strengthen collaborations and partnerships for children and families within communities and between communities, and between communities and organisations across the three states. The aims are to refine practice at all levels starting from the family and community; to promote policy; and to develop new strategies and solutions to problems. To achieve those aims, MSFA makes grants, enables networking, convenes meetings etc, and provides comprehensive technical assistance and family resources.

Creating constituencies for change

When MSFA approaches communities, it finds that much of the best programme development is intuited by people at the local level. MSFA works at spotting such initiatives, especially those that show an understanding of how community activities are strategic to promoting progressive, wide scale public thought. MSFA also looks for such key elements as accountability and a willingness to learn about standards of practice, and relevant concepts and models.

MSFA bases its work on principles and values that the communities themselves have articulated. One example is that it takes 'a whole village to raise a child', meaning that, although parents have the primary responsibility for the care and nurture of young children, they need support. Their communities have to be able to supply this support, so MSFA has to help communities to build the necessary resources.

In practical terms, MSFA promotes local initiatives that build on community problem solving; that are inclusive and collaborative; that encourage the participation and empowerment of parents, youth and civic leaders in planning and governance; that stimulate progressive policies towards families and children and that can be seen as strategically relevant to region wide community development.

MSFA also serves as a mechanism for connecting disparate and otherwise unrelated efforts. It then seeks fertile ground in which family support resources, education and economic development can work together to improve the quality of life for children and families.

The needs of those who work for change

Those involved in the work often discover many smaller-scale needs. For example, collaboration and partnership building as ideas are a great deal easier to battle with than learning to work through the historic divides of race and class that are so prevalent in the region. Inevitably, people need support as they work through conflicts that arise. MSFA encourages them to focus on positive concepts such as a shared belief in change work; and to work cooperatively to overcome the concerns that may detract from work on the bigger issues.

'simple teaching aids made as part of a multicultural curriculum introduce children to discrimination issues' in a positive way. Boston Housing project, USA

People also need to see that their efforts are valuable – it's important that they see their own work as an important part of a much wider whole. So, as the results start to come in, MSFA lifts people up and shares their learning and their experiences with other communities. This simultaneously enhances their self-esteem and confidence while having a major impact on the people in other communities.

Removing barriers to change

Many of the people MSFA works with have historically been marginalised because of their race. They have very little history of participation in public policy and decision making: no one has ever allowed, encouraged or enabled them to look at their circumstances, decide what they need, and then work towards change. This underlines the need for the anti-racism work that MSFA is also engaged in.

Then there are the perceptions that policy makers and others have about 'the poor'. These prevent power sharing and result in prescriptive policy making. MSFA is helping to shape a new perspective so that all people can have a voice in local, state and regional resource development.

Finally, as an enabler, MSFA has to be non-partisan and maintain a neutral position. It aims to be the place to which any person, or any organisation or institution can come to talk about their very different perspectives and work towards change.

The African American church and other forces for change

Many rural communities lack an organisational infrastructure to serve children and families. What they do have is a church. Because the African American church is often the strongest – probably the only – community, economic or social organisation that exists in many poor communities, it is essential to work closely with them and strengthen them. Historically, the African American churches have developed many leaders, provided for their members and communities' needs and offered additional services and support. They also provide spiritual and moral fibre to activities ranging from housing rehabilitation to child care provision.

MSFA also works with nation wide bodies that have brought organisers into the region to support communities interested in mobilisation of families and children. They train the local residents in research and conducting 'actions' to promote change. In these 'actions', public officials and others who are responsible for resources for children are held accountable for how those resources do or do not meet children's needs. In New Orleans and in Baton Rouge, for example, the Pacific Institute for Community Organising (PICO) and the Industrial Areas Foundation (IAF) have helped people to come together by using congregation-based organising.

MSFA also supports 'Mississippi Voices for Children', the only African American child advocacy organisation in the state. It is especially interested in promoting child care services, especially for low income families; and its major functions are to serve as a watch dog for child care policy, and to provide research, data, and information to state legislators and government officials.

The future

MSFA's future work will focus more on how to bring about change by promoting increased citizen involvement in policy making. There is a need for a different voice about what children's needs are and about how programmes and resources should be designed.

MSFA therefore plans to convene forums where local residents who have developed resources and policies at the local level start to have a dialogue with the state policy makers.

MSFA also wants to promote 'results based accountability' for child and family resource development. This says 'Okay, so you served a hundred kids; what was the impact in their lives? What's different for them one year later?'. The failure of the health and family service system to be fully accountable has contributed largely to what has made us vulnerable to the attacks that we are suffering now in the policy arena. ┘

Network news

one of the 'children of the earth'

Botswana: new directions

The Kuru Development Trust has recently published two project evaluation reports about its work with the San people of the Kalahari desert. The papers, entitled *Project memorandum for Kuru Development Trust* and *Community owned development – exploring an alternative rural development support programme*, look at the development and work of the Trust over the past 10 years, reporting on the pitfalls, failures and successes. They outline the rationale for the Trust's plans to develop a new approach. This approach will put the responsibility for the 'Children of the Earth' project's development work on the communities themselves, for which community level capacity building will be set in motion. In order to be able to support this process, the Trust will reorganise itself and will realign its objectives. The reports explain how it intends to do these.

Jamaica: working on labour day

children all over Jamaica benefit from the voluntary labour

In Jamaica a theme is chosen for Labour Day each year. It is a symbolic day when people traditionally offer their services voluntarily to the community. The Foundation-supported 'Basic Schools Revitalisation Programme' inspired the government to select the community-based pre-school system as the focal point for community action on Labour Day 1996. On 23 May Prime Minister P.J. Patterson launched a programme of activities under the theme 'Basic Schools – Building Better Values'. Over 20,000 people volunteered their time to do such work as: repairs to school buildings, sanitary facilities and playgrounds; making or repairing furniture; and even building new schools. The value of the help extended to the schools was incalculable, and very much appreciated.

ERRATUM
Jamaica: Satisfying the early yearn to learn

In the last *Newsletter*'s Network News we mistakenly associated a report of research findings of the Dudley Grant Memorial Trust's 'Operation START' project with a report produced by another organisation. The Trust's report is entitled 'Evaluation Report on the Early Childhood Education Programme in Jamaica' and is available from the Dudley Grant Memorial Trust at the Centre for Early Childhood Education at the University of the West Indies, Mona Campus in Kingston. We apologise for this error.

Malaysia: a helpful framework

The Partners of Community Organisation (PACOS) works to strengthen indigenous community organisations in the state of Sabah, to help them promote the interests of their communities. PACOS, which runs the 'Lessons from the Countryside' project, has recently produced a report that sums up its work. It has identified eight areas of activity which it calls 'key result areas' and, with the help of specially designed framework, has analysed these in terms of aspects on which to concentrate, what has been done and what still needs to be done. In order to help plan its work over the next few years PACOS has also done a 'SWOT' analysis on these eight areas: that is, it has tabled their Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities and Threats. The framework and SWOT table has enabled PACOS to review its goals, strategies and operations.

Netherlands: an anti-discriminatory/intercultural training approach

ADITA-early years – the 'Anti-discriminatory/intercultural training approach for the early years' – is a project involving organisations and individuals from Europe and the USA which is developing training guidelines built on anti-discriminatory/intercultural underpinnings. These guidelines will eventually be shared with students and staff working with young children throughout Europe. The project is coordinated in the Netherlands and the UK by the organisations MUTANT (*Projectbureau voor Innovatie in Methodiek en Management* - Project Office for Innovation in Methodology and Managment) and EYTARN (Early Years Trainers' Anti-Racist Network) which, together with the Foundation, organised a two day 'experts meeting' in May at the Foundation's premises. The meeting was attended by participants from the UK, Denmark, the Netherlands, France, Portugal, Greece, Ireland and the USA, and by Foundation staff members. The aim of the meeting was to collect expertise in order to produce draft guidelines for a training model. The next step will be to take the guidelines to a wider European level, leading eventually to the organisation of a European conference.

Nicaragua: children having a voice

On 4 June over 100 children aged six to 10 gathered in the National Assembly to present their views on children's rights. The children took the seats of the legislators who moved to the public benches and quietly listened to the children. The presentation was animated with the children expressing their views and outlining what they expect from the government. This event took place during Nicaragua's 'Children's Week'. The children came from a number of schools and organisations, including the *'Los cumiches'* (the youngest ones) project that is run by CANTERA. *'Los cumiches'* works to promote the holistic development of young children living in disadvantaged areas, and runs training sessions for para-professional early childhood workers, parents and resource persons.

Portugal: a presidential visit

The *'Escolas Isoladas'* (Isolated Schools) project, run by the *Instituto das Comunidades Educativas* (ICE – Institute of Educational Communities), was recently honoured to receive Portugal's President Jorge Sampaio. This visit was the first that the President has made to an educational project since taking office early in 1996. The *'Escolas Isoladas'* project works with children and families living in rural areas, and aims to encourage greater accessibility to educational facilities for these children.

South Africa: logging child rearing practices

Understanding the realities of the people that you are working with is crucial for structuring development programmes. To this end the organisation Training and Resources in Early Education (TREE) – with the assistance of the Child Development Program of the Human Sciences Research Council – carried out a survey on the child rearing practices of black families in selected urban and rural settings in KwaZulu-Natal. TREE, which runs the 'Rethinking Toddler Care' project, has now compiled an informative report (April 1996) based on the survey outcomes. This will guide the planning of its early childhood programmes.

Thailand: a new group of people

a centre was built for the children with the help of the villagers, Thailand.

The 'CONNECT' project, run by *Ecoles sans Frontières* (ESF – schools without borders) has recently started working in remote villages in the north east where most of the villagers make their living as small-scale farmers. A new site of operations is Petchaboon, in villages where many Hmong reside. The work will focus on community-based early childhood and family education. The people of the villages welcomed ESF's suggestion to set up a child development centre and volunteered seven villagers to work with it. ESF staff members therefore spent time compiling information and familiarising themselves with the realities of the area. In order to help them think through the process of devising a policy and strategies, ESF staff members developed a very useful visual framework. The children were initially reached through mobile activities until a centre was built with the help of the villagers. These activities helped prepare them for the child development centre that was eventually built.

right: an illustration from Parent Network's 'Ten years of making a difference to family life' booklet, UK

UK: publications launch

Parent Network (PN) launched two booklets that it had produced to mark its 10th anniversary: 'Parent Network: 10 years of making a differentce to family life' and 'Parent-Link: a parenting education programme'. The first booklet describes the work of PN through relating the experiences of parents who have attended its courses. The second is an independent evaluation of one of PN's programmes, the Parent-Link programme. PN runs parenting courses for parents which focus on confidence building and communication skills. The courses last three months with weekly sessions run by parents who are specially trained by PN. Having completed the programme, parents are encouraged to set up and run their own self help groups. ❏

Obituary

It is with sadness that we record the death of Ornanong Vongasawathepchai Laosakulrat on 16 April 1996. Ornanong was a member of Maya in Thailand, an organisation which reaches children and families in disadvantaged urban and rural areas through theatre and puppet performances. Apart from being a skilled and enthusiastic puppeteer and actress, she was dedicated to working with children and was a much loved and respected colleague. We extend our deepest sympathy to Ornanong's family and friends, and to her colleagues at Maya.

Award for the recognition of a commitment to children

Dr Willem H. Welling

On 12 April 1996, Rhodes University in South Africa conferred the degree of Doctor of Social Science *Honoris Causa* on **Dr Willem H. Welling** – formerly Executive Director of the Foundation – for his close involvement in and lasting commitment to early childhood development in South Africa. The Foundation has supported work in ECD since 1968.

Dr Welling, born in Amsterdam in 1923, studied law before joining the staff of UNESCO in 1951, ultimately holding the position of Deputy Director of Higher Education. In 1968 Dr Welling took up the post of Executive Director of the Bernard van Leer Foundation. He held the post of Executive Director of the Foundation until his retirement on 31 December 1988.

Dr Welling's interest in the Foundation and its work has continued in his position as Executive Director Emeritus. The Foundation congratulates Dr Welling on his honorary degree.

Award for the recognition of a commitment to children

Dr José Amar Amar

The *Sociedad Colombiana de Psicología* (Colombian Society of Psychology) conferred the *Premio Nacional de Psicología* (National Psychology Award) on Dr José Juan Amar Amar in May. Dr Amar is Dean of the Department of Humanities and Social Sciences at the *Universidad del Norte* (University of the North) in Barranquilla, Colombia. Dr Amar has long been connected to the Foundation through his involvement with the *'Costa Atlantica'* and *'Infancia y calidad de vida'* (Infancy and quality of life) projects.

The *Sociedad Colombiana de Psicología* is the foremost organisation of professional psychologists in Colombia. It confers the *Premio Nacional de Psicología* every two years on a psychologist outstanding for his/her scientific research efforts and for his/her service to the community. Dr Amar came to the notice of the *Sociedad* for his work with his colleagues in the university in developing – over the course of 17 years – a research programme on the development of young children living in poverty. The research findings are being used to help children beyond the borders of Colombia: they are being used throughout Latin America and have aroused the interest of many institutions in Europe.

The Foundation congratulates Dr Amar Amar on his award.

Report from the field

A través dos teus ollos e coas túas mans – 'Through your eyes and with your hands'

by Celia Maria Armesto Rodríguez

Galicia is one of Spain's poorest regions. It is predominantly rural with an aging and scattered population, and high unemployment. Given the shortage of opportunities for young children, *Preescolar na Casa* (Pre-school at home) set up a programme to bring pre-schools into the home. It does this through weekly radio and television programmes, and through a monthly magazine focusing on early childhood development. The Foundation supports PNC's work in setting up training and support structures.

PNC reached maturity last year as it is 18 years since *orientadores* (educators), parents and children aged 0-6 years began participating in educational activities in the rural areas of Galicia in northern Spain. The activities give mothers and fathers some basic knowledge in early childhood education so that they can work with their children to improve their educational chances.

With *A través dos teus ollos e coas túas mans* we present a roving exhibition of photographs and toys that introduces *Preescolar na Casa* (PNC) and its *Educación Infantil en la Familia* (early childhood education in the family) project to those who do not already know it. This exhibition has already travelled through various areas of Galicia visiting schools, cultural centres, and teacher training centres. It is divided into two sections.

A través dos teus ollos – 'through your eyes'

This is a collection of around 70 photographs that shows fundamental aspects of the work that PNC has developed. The central objective of the collection is to introduce PNC through visual materials showing the groups of parents and children, the areas where they meet, and the environment.

Each photo is grouped around a theme relevant to children's lives, for example: the home, the family, the friends, the toys. Each photo has a label which explains what is taking place, where the photo was taken, and the date.

They are not perfect photos in terms of light and composition, but they are photos that try to reach the hearts of people with their images and messages.

Coas túas mans – 'with your hands'

This is a collection of toys made by people in their own homes and made with things they find there. The objective of this collection is to bring across the idea that a toy is made to be played with and enjoyed, and that even an object that seems so simple can achieve this. The collection furthermore attempts to recreate toys which our parents and grandparents played with in the past as they can be useful and bring pleasure to children and parents of today.

At PNC we are convinced that toys are important – indeed irreplaceable – in helping children to develop their motor skills, intelligence, language and imagination: toys are essential in playing to learn activities.

We want to promote the idea that the time spent on making toys is a time of quality and care that is dedicated to children. We are convinced, and we try to show it in this collection, that the best 'toys' are actually the moments that each mother and father spends with her or his children.

As with the photos, each toy is labelled with information about the maker, the place, the date, and the material used.

The learning opportunities of daily life

Up till now, we have shown the collection in 11 areas of rural Galicia and foresee exhibiting in another nine. During the exhibition, we have tried to show that every situation in daily life has its educational value because children learn continuously. The parents with whom we have been working have shown they can create opportunities for play and learning, using a simple biscuit tin, just as one example. More important, they have gone back to their own childhoods and remembered the joy that they got from those rag dolls or cars that their grandmothers or grandfathers made especially for them. ❑

the best 'toys' are the moments that each mother or father spends with her or his children

Israel: Bringing something useful home

by Roni Ben-Efrat

Education is one of the gravest problems facing the Arab population in Israel. Tests by the Ministry of Education in 1991 and 1992 in mathematics and reading comprehension revealed astonishing discrepancies, with Arab children lagging behind the other children. This article is based on articles by Roni Ben-Efrat that appeared in the magazine *Challenge*. It shows how a project run by Hanitzotz/A-Sharara Publishing House and the Al-Baqa cultural centre is trying to address this situation. Further information can be obtained from Ms Roni Ben-Efrat, Hanitzotz/A-Sharara Publishing House, PO Box 41199, Jaffa 61411, Israel. Tel & Fax +972 2 792270.

The idea of establishing a school for mothers in the village of Majd al-Krum in the Galilee was born in 1992 as a result of the outcomes of a nationwide test administered by the Ministry of Education which revealed that the state of education for Arab children was worse than had been expected. The school was an initiative of Hanitzotz/A-Sharara Publishing House and the Al-Baqa cultural centre, following discussions about overcoming the low level of achievement among Arab children in public schools while simultaneously involving the family and community in the issue.

The first step was to assess the situation in the area. Surveys distributed to parents showed a direct correlation between parents' educational level and the achievements of their children. This finding led the organisations to the idea of training mothers to help their children: mothers could take the opportunity to return to school and become involved in moulding their children's future.

mothers attend mothers 'schools' in order to help their children with their school work

Mothers who were open to the idea organised meetings in their houses with other mothers and people from Hanitzotz/A-Sharara Publishing House and the Al-Baqa centre. The discussions were lively, despite the many fears that were raised. They went on for nine months until suitable teachers were found and 14 women enrolled to form the first class.

> Women weren't encouraged to study – families hoped that their adolescent daughters would marry. My husband was pleased that I went to the Mothers' School and learned how to help our children. In the Mothers' School I did not feel as if I were a student and 'they' were the teachers. We felt equal.

> I used to hit my son to try to make him understand. After a few sessions at the Mothers School I instead began to read him his homework. Now, if he doesn't understand, I suggest that we take a break so that I don't become upset and raise my hand to him as I used to. Before, when I called him to do his homework, he would lower his head and his eyes would fill with tears. He said that he was afraid of me. Today, on his own initiative, he comes and asks me to sit with him and teach him.

Bad memories of school

During the discussions many mothers and teachers spoke about their time school days. School used to be an unpleasant experience: children were beaten if they didn't know the answers and they rarely understood the lessons because the material was irrelevant to their lives.

These memories meant that much time was spent talking to the mothers about the new opportunities available to them through school. Convincing them was nothing less than a revolution because suddenly education wasn't only the responsibility of the children and the school but also of the mothers themselves.

The Mothers' School

The Mothers' School runs courses on reading comprehension and mathematics for eight hours a week for three months. In addition, the mothers can attend lectures, and visit places such as a public library, a university, or women's organisations. For

> The most important thing is that the Mothers' School enables the woman to feel that she really has a role to play. The hours that we sat and learned in this course are like someone going to the market and bringing something useful home. But instead of vegetables, the mother brings something in her head for her children.

many, these are rare opportunities to leave their homes and open their minds to new experiences which are exclusively their own.

As the primary objective of the Mothers' School is to help children in the early years of school, the mothers learn how to help and encourage their children. Within a year of operation, the villagers saw the fruits of the courses and the school teachers saw a difference in the children: their marks were higher and their behaviour had improved. In fact, the success of the Mothers' School in Majd al-Krum has encouraged the project to negotiate for the opening of another Mothers' School in the town of Jaffa.

But reaching the point where the mothers can have an impact on their children was often difficult for the mothers themselves. This was because they sometimes had to deal with pressure from their families and neighbours, as well as their own feelings of ignorance and worthlessness. The experiences of a few of the women that feature in this article highlight their positive feelings as well as some of the difficulties they had to overcome. ❑

> My daughter was doing badly in school, and the girls in her class didn't play with her. When I began the course and started to help her, her school mates immediately noticed the improvement in her. They began to make friends with her. Now my daughter plays with the others; she has changed a lot.
>
> As for me, this is the first time in my life that I am leaving my home to acquire an education. At first I didn't tell my husband that I was going because I wasn't sure the course was serious and I didn't think I would continue. When I saw that it was serious, and that I needed to make a commitment, I spoke to him. He didn't give me his permission. The people from the Centre came several times to talk to him, and finally he agreed and I completed the course.

USA: Bridges to the future

by Nina Gibans

The theme of the last issue of the *Newsletter* was 'The Environment of the child'. In connection with that, Nina Gibans has contributed this article on her work. She is Director of the Bridges project, which is a project under the joint sponsorship of the Cleveland Children's Museum and the Case Western Reserve University of Cleveland, Ohio. In this article Nina Gibans looks at how children's museums form a natural part of young children's learning environments in the USA, and discusses how the Bridges project is planning to examine their contribution to the communities they serve.

Child centred, hands-on, experimental, multidisciplinary, fun, friendly, warm, caring, age-appropriate, family-centred. Social interaction, transmission of values, inquiry-based, cultural awareness, discovery learning. These are some of the distinguishing characteristics of children's museums. There are 200 of them all over the USA and they are sprouting up all over the world. Children's museums appeal across generations, physical abilities, cultures and economic levels, and of course, they appeal to children.

They spread values – about teaching and learning, parenting and grandparenting, caretaking and collaborating on the important areas of early childhood. Because many children's museums are located in city centres, their programmes frequently address the needs of low income, racially diverse populations. They are the subject of a study project, *Children's Museums: Bridges to the Future*, which will lead to a new understanding about the possible future roles of children's museums. The project will look at the contribution of children's museums to the social fabric of families, schools and communities and to the museum field; how children's museums help develop a sense of sharing, caring and social responsibility in children; and how they, as cornerstones of life-long learning, can flourish and be enhanced.

right: children learn through active, hands-on play, USA

Looking at interaction

In the project we want to find out how children's museums contribute to society and who is served. The five-year research project began in early 1994 by focusing on the question: how does an organisation **know** how well it is doing, especially in terms of its interaction with families, schools, and communities? With this as its basis, the Bridges project is examining the interactions which take place between children's museums and families/

exhibitions can encourage social interaction, and learning, and they appeal across age groups. Hunter Caravan Project, Australia

individuals, schools, communities and the museum field at large. It is designed to identify, assess and interpret the role, interactions and impact of children's museums in relation to schools, individuals and families, their communities and the museum field; and document and disseminate the outcomes. This work was seen by the Cleveland Children's Museum and the Case Western Reserve University as a valid and unexplored research area that could enhance the knowledge of professionals in the non-profit world and the public at large. Thus far, 150 museums have been involved. At the next stage, we will examine about 30 museum programmes or projects across the country, and from there develop 6-8 major case studies.

The *Bridges* project is outcome oriented. It will define the critical issues affecting children's museums; it will develop research methodologies appropriate to those issues; and make and inventory issues and activities in the 150 children's museums. The project builds on research and knowledge in the non-profit field and offers frameworks for studying lifelong learning. By producing state-of-the-art documentation, it will help educational, philanthropic and legislative policy makers think about the potential of children's museums as educational and community institutions.

Contributing to life-long learning

This project has generated much enthusiasm and support from the field: a field that nurtures family learning and development, that responds to community needs, builds dialogue, and helps community groups bridge economic, cultural, religious and ethnic divides. Children's museums are helping to change the way museums work for visitors, innovating change in relation to their communities, encouraging discovery, and conveying ideas to diverse publics. The Bridges project's research design holds promise for future studies conducted in schools and non-profit organisations. It will be useful to the field of education, to cultural organisations, foundations, and government entities. Children's museums build bridges to the excitement of learning as a lifelong adventure. And we are all part of that adventure. ┘

More information on children's museums and the Bridges project can be obtained from Ms Nina Gibans, Director Bridges Project, Cleveland Children's Museum, 10730 Euclid Avenue, Cleveland, OH 44106-2200, USA. Tel: +1.216.7917114, Fax: +1.216.7918836.

Breastfeeding: a community responsibility

Breastmilk is the sole truly **universal** food for the entire human species. It serves as a vital link for nutrition and survival across the entire span of human existence. It nurtures the newborn, the infant, and the young child during their most vulnerable years, all the while providing a powerful source of protection from infectious disease. Breastmilk is the safest and most sustainable food for babies.

The World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action (WABA), located in Malaysia, works to raise public awareness about the benefits of breast milk; a baby's right to receive breast milk; and the need to create supportive environments for women who choose to breastfeed. While a woman's choice about how to feed her child is a personal one, the climate of the community in which she lives greatly influences her decisions.

WABA has launched a World Breastfeeding Week every year since 1992. The Week provides an occasion to look at various issues that can affect a woman's choice and her ability to breastfeed. Breastfeeding is not an isolated concern as its value will be felt well beyond the immediate family in ways that range from reduced national food and health care costs to improved child spacing. This year the theme of the World Breastfeeding Week will be 'A community responsibility'. The week – 1-7 August 1996 – will focus on the role of the entire community in protecting, promoting and supporting breastfeeding. This year's theme recognises that, although women make their own breastfeeding decisions, they need an enabling environment at every level. The World Breastfeeding Week calls on families, schools, educators, employers, health facilities, organisations, the media, religious institutions, businesses, government and so on to each take responsibility for supporting women's and children's right to breastfeed. It suggests that communities must become mother and baby friendly; and that the community itself benefits when its youngest members are well nourished.

WABA has produced a pack to help people in everyday situations promote both this year's World Breastfeeding Week and awareness of the benefits of breastfeeding in general. The pack includes a colourful brochure that gives ideas on taking direct action in people's own communities and environments to support women and make breastfeeding possible. ┘

Information about breastfeeding, the World Breastfeeding Week, and about the World Alliance for Breastfeeding Action can be obtained from: WABA, P.O. Box 1200, 10850 Penang, Malaysia. Tel: +60.4.6584816, Fax: +60.4.6572655.

India: street and working children

Butterflies is a non-governmental organisation with a programme for street and working children aged 5 to 18 years. It has been working in the Union Territory of Delhi since January 1988. This article describes approaches to children's rights issues that have emerged over the past eight years.

We are in contact with about 600 children, of which 285 to 300 come regularly for our activities. Most are migrants to Delhi, are self employed and are working as porters, shoe polishers, rag pickers, or vendors, or are engaged in roadside restaurants, workshops, garages and small-scale industries. They work between eight to fifteen hours a day, and earn on average the equivalent of US$0.50 per day.

We believe in the right of all children to have a full childhood and, within that, the right to protection, respect, opportunities, and participation in their own growth and development. Children, particularly girls, are the core of our concern.

We also believe in the principle of community participation and democracy in decision making. Therefore, our strategy aims to ensure that children participate in all issues that are pertinent to them; that they plan future activities, monitoring and assessment activities and that, in some cases, they go on to become street educators themselves.

Giving children a voice

Every fortnight children in each area hold a meeting to discuss their problems and plan for activities. Once a month, five representatives from each contact point come to the Children's Council of Bal Sabha district. The children elect a chairperson who presides over meetings and they usually follow an agenda. Issues most often discussed are concerned with police harassment, non-payment of wages, the need for better jobs and wages, education, saving schemes, and the problem of gambling and drugs.

Children learn the principles of democracy, freedom of expression, that a consensus must be reached to make a final decision and that sometimes you need to compromise.

This strategy has also helped us refine our programme.

One of the challenges of working with street children is to evolve activities that stem from their needs. Therefore there can be no blue-print of the activities to be taken up.

All activities are conducted on the street or in parks: we have no centres. Community resources are tapped before approaching outsiders for help or support; and we also involve school children and other youth in organising and conducting programmes.

Alternative education

Of the 300 street children who participate in our alternative education project, 80 per cent have never been to school while the remaining 20 per cent dropped out. However, because they have lived on the streets for a long time and are wage earners, their knowledge about their work situation, environment and life itself, is tremendous. Therefore, education for them is about education for life.

Our street educators are available at times suitable for these children.

We have day and night classes and conduct our classes on street corners, in parks and in bus stations. By being on the street we are visible to children so, even if they are not regulars, they can drop by as and when they feel like it.

We also identify potential leaders who can become part of our team of street educators. Darshan, a shoe shiner, and Ashraf, a porter, have both become very effective street educators.

Health care

Apart from curative treatment such as medication and admission to hospitals, we have a preventive approach to health wherein we give health education on specific topics such as personal hygiene, common diseases including sexually transmitted diseases, knowledge of one's body and the effects of drugs.

We are hoping to get a mobile clinic that can go regularly to areas where there is high concentration of street and working children. This would be on a regular basis and include referral to more formal medical services.

Reestablishing confidence in adults

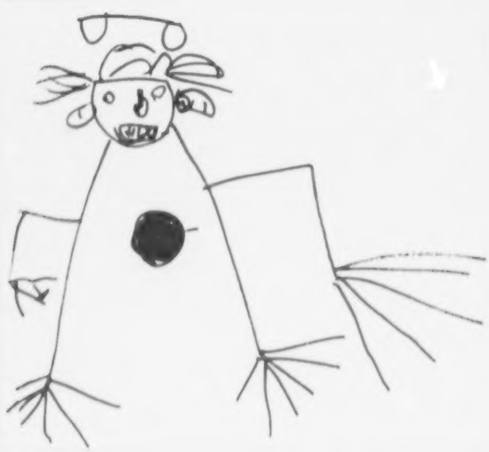
Reaching out to street children who have little or no family support can present special problems – for example, many of them have lost all confidence in adults. Because of constant abuse and exploitation,

it is impossible for some children to believe that an adult approaching them has anything sincere to offer. For this reason initial contacts, gestures of friendship, and the building of acceptance and confidence require great skill and sensitivity on the part of the adult.

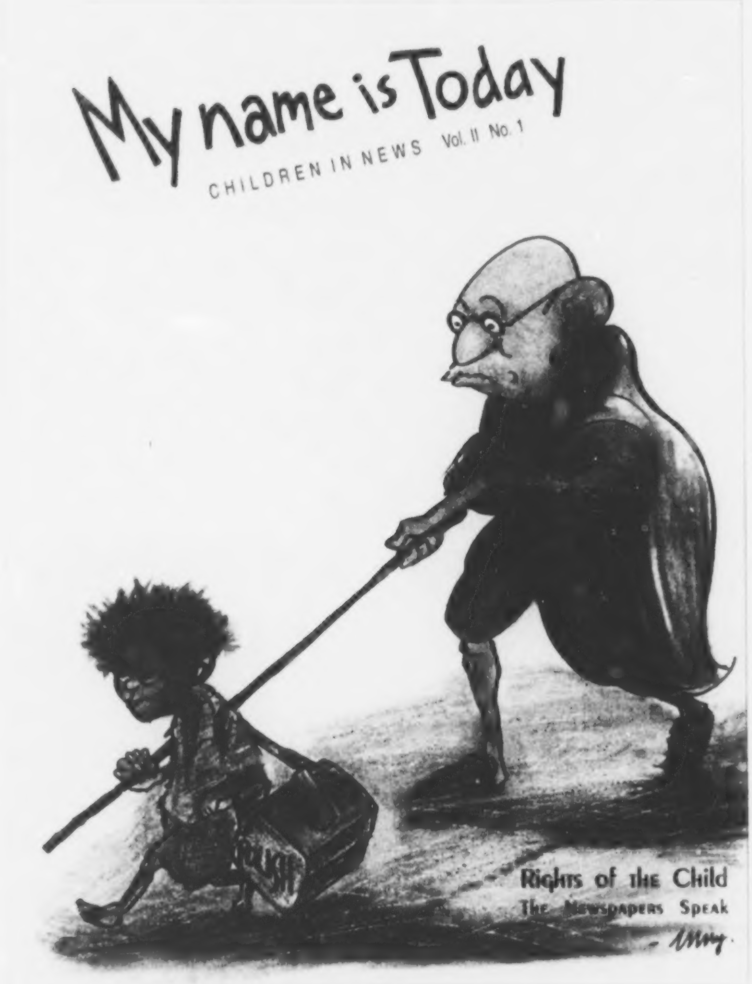
We have a team of street educators who play an important role in initiating contact with street children through regular visits to their places of work and abode. They make it a point to say 'Hello' and spend time with the children. Occasionally they also organise recreational and group activities in order to overcome initial fear and mistrust and develop a trusting relationship based on equality, respect and admiration. Our experience has shown that, unless we have built this relationship, it is difficult to motivate the children to come together for collective action, to continue their education, or to discuss their problems. Once the relationship has been established, the next step is to involve them in an activity that they help design and develop. Children participate in planning most of their activities and also make a nominal contribution for all their activities: nothing is given free. We have found this strategy quite useful. Children honour their commitments and participate in the planned activity with a feeling that it is their programme and therefore they have to make it a success. ❑

Documentation, research and advocacy centres

Ten centres ensure that materials are collected and are made available for research and advocacy. In addition, we publish *My name is Today*, a quarterly file of news items about children from various Indian newspapers and journals. We also organise training courses for NGOs on subjects including communication.



above: when young children experience a traumatic event – such as sexual abuse – one way to help them express what they have suffered is through drawing. From My name is Today



Butterflies publishes My name is Today, *quarterly. It contains news clippings about children and relevant articles. Such is its quality that it has won the first prize for 'Excellence in the media' at the World Forum organised by the International Forum for Child Welfare in November 1994 in Madras. More information is available from the Documentation and Research Centre, Butterflies, C-7 Green Park Extension, New Delhi 100 016, India.*

New publications from the Foundation

In search of the rainbow: pathways to quality in large-scale programmes for young disadvantaged children

by Martin Woodhead

In search of the rainbow

Our perception of 'quality' in early childhood programmes can be likened to our perception of a rainbow. Composed as it is of sunshine and rain, it changes with every shift in perspective. And just as people have searched for the illusory crock of gold at the rainbow's end, so development experts search for universal definitions and standards of quality. But quality is contextual. Drawing on examples from several countries, Martin Woodhead argues that sensitivity to diversity and to one's own preconceptions should be key elements informing all early childhood work.

In search of the rainbow: pathways to quality in large-scale programmes for young disadvantaged children (ISBN 90-6195-042-2) is number 10 in the Foundation's Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections series.

They won't take no for an answer: the Relais Enfants-Parent

by Elizabeth Ayre

A small association in France has been waging a quiet battle to bring the children of prisoners – the 'forgotten children' – to the fore of social, political and judicial policy. The *Relais Enfants-Parents* works to safeguard the psychological and emotional development of children by serving as a link between them and their imprisoned parents. It tries to preserve, and often to re-create, the bond between the children and their parents which separation often weakens. Initially facing resistance from the penal system and doubt from imprisoned parents, this book shows how the *Relais Enfants-Parents* persevered – not taking no or an answer.

They won't take no for an answer: the Relais Enfants-Parents (ISBN 90-6195-043-0) is number 11 in the Foundation's Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections series.

Calidad de vida y desarrollo infantil

by José Juan Amar Amar

17
Calidad de vida y desarrollo infantil

This Spanish language paper presents a study conducted in Colombia that set out to establish the effects on each child of his or her life experiences, of how he or she builds a personal reality, and of how that shapes perceptions, beliefs and expectations. The paper's core message is the need to develop intervention programmes that are based on the concept of children as individuals within their particular culture.

The author has 17 years of experience working with an interdisciplinary team from the *Universidad del Norte*, Colombia, developing alternative models of intervention for children living in poverty. He is therefore very well placed to ensure that the results of the study change approaches to programmes. Starting from a focus on the role of parents and communities in enhancing the quality of life for their children, he calls for policies and actions that are born within communities themselves – the state is too remote to play more than an integrating role.

Calidad de vida y desarrollo infantil (ISBN 90-6195-041-4), published March 1996, is number 17 in the Foundation's Working Papers in Early Childhood Development series.

Resources

Introducing evaluation in Hebrew

Introducing evaluation by Willem van der Eyken – published by the Foundation in English, Spanish and Portuguese – is now available in Hebrew. It has been adapted for an Israeli audience by Shatil, a support project for voluntary organisations, and was published June 1996. Copies are available from Hamutal Delima, Shatil, PO Box 53395, Jerusalem 91533, Israel. Copies in English, Spanish and Portuguese are available from the Bernard van Leer Foundation at the address on the back page. An Arabic-language version is in preparation.

Critical Transitions: Human Capacity Development Across the Lifespan

This book by Beryl Levinger is highly recommended as it provides confirmation for the work of all those who advocate participatory experiential learning as the key to human capacity development.

Critical Transitions:
Human Capacity Development
Across the Lifespan
Beryl Levinger

Beryl Levinger's analysis goes beyond training as an aspect of human capacity development, and far beyond the notion of human capacity development as a 'trendy' management tool. Her application of the term 'human capacity development' , which is a challenge to all who work in the 'development' field whether at policymaking, management or field level, is to the whole of human life. Human capacity, in her view, refers to an individual' s ability to perform tasks which are necessary to survive and prosper. Specifically, she focuses on three stages of human development: early childhood; schooling; and making a living. More importantly, she selects four core areas of human behaviour and national development which could provide opportunities for participation: family life, livelihood, civic affairs and environmental stewardship.

This book' s greatest contribution to the human sciences is the creation of a new learning science **partagogy**, whose primary focus 'is to help individuals develop the skills and knowledge they need to access available participation opportunities and create new ones over the course of their lifespans.'

Andragogy (the art/science of teaching adults as adults) and pedagogy (the art/science of teaching children) are replaced by partagogy, which encourages all humans to collaborate (rather than compete), to be adaptable and flexible, and to develop problemsolving skills.

A central and cogent argument in this book is that survival, at this stage in the development of society, demands these skills. Rapid technological changes and globalisation require individuals who can function at higher levels of learning, thinking and doing in all aspects of their lives. Passivity and skills limited to particular knowledge areas are no longer appropriate: it is, for example, unlikely that people will remain in the same job throughout their lifetimes.

In order for people to be effective in family, employment, civic affairs and stewardship of the environment roles, those who teach, train, manage, advise will have to change their approaches to become 'the guide on the side rather than the sage on the stage'.

This book goes beyond offering economic and political analyses of world problems. Instead it proposes a people centred approach for the future which is based on the principles of empowerment and building on strengths, and provides a realistic and concrete plan for human capacity development.

This book is available from either: Education Development Center, 55 Chapel Street, Newton, MA 02158, USA. Tel: +1.617.9697100 ext. 2642, Fax: +1.617.3326405; or, United Nations Development Programme, Science, Technology and Private Sector Division, 1 UN Plaza, New York, NY 10017, USA. Tel: +1.212.9065858, Fax: +1.212.9066350.

Children in war: community strategies for healing

This publication looks at how children become the casualties – and sometimes the perpetrators – of modern warfare and strife. Though children in war situations endure the most dreadful events, and are physically and psychologically damaged as a result, Children in war also looks at how children are not 'passive victims, but active survivors'. Children in war illustrates how programmes that are built on the caregivers and community members around war affected children can help to heal their psychological wounds, and help them retrieve a little of a lost childhood. It recognises that communities are resilient and inventive in supporting their children. The publication emerged from field work that is

childreninwar
COMMUNITY STRATEGIES FOR HEALING

Bernard van Leer
Foundation
Newsletter
Number 83 July 1996

Text from the *Newsletter* may be reproduced or adapted without the publisher's permission, provided it is not distributed for profit and with attribution to the Bernard van Leer Foundation. Unless otherwise stated, all photographs are by courtesy of the project concerned.

ISSN 0921-5840

Bernard van Leer Foundation
PO Box 82334
2508 EH The Hague
The Netherlands
Tel: (070) 351 2040
Telefax: (070) 350 2373

About the Foundation

The Bernard van Leer Foundation is an international, philanthropic and professional institution based in The Netherlands. The Foundation's income is derived from the Van Leer Group Foundation, the majority shareholder of Royal Packaging Industries van Leer. Created in 1949 for broad humanitarian purposes, the Bernard van Leer Foundation concentrates on the development of low-cost, community-based initiatives in early childhood care and education for socially and culturally disadvantaged children from birth to eight years of age.

The Foundation provides financial support and professional guidance to governmental, academic and voluntary bodies setting up projects to enable disadvantaged children to benefit fully from edu-cational and social development opportunities. The Foundation currently supports approximately 100 major projects in some 40 developing and industrialised countries. The dissemination, adaptation and replication of successful project outcomes are crucial to the Foundation's work.

Grants are not made to individuals nor for general support to organisations. The Foundation does not provide study, research or travel grants. No grants are made in response to general appeals. In accordance with its statutes, the Foundation gives preference to countries in which the Van Leer Group of Companies is established.

Administration

Trustees: Chairman: I. Samrén (Sweden); Mrs M.C. Benton (USA); W.H. Brouwer (Netherlands); W.W. Cross (USA); R. Freudenberg (Germany); J. Kremers (Netherlands); H.B. van Liemt (Netherlands); A. Mar-Haim (Israel); P.J.J. Rich (France)

Executive Director: M.C.E. van Gendt

based on the belief that each community, however grief-stricken, contains the resources to heal itself. The field work was carried out through programmes in Latin America, Africa, Europe and Asia. Children in war is produced by the Southern Africa Training and Research Initiative (SATARI) which is a consortium of three institutions: Save the Children USA, the School of Social Work at the University of Zimbabwe, and Duke University, USA. It is intended for field workers and others helping war-affected children.

Further information can be obtained from: Save the Children Federation USA, Hart Leadership programme, Terry Sanford Institute of Public Policy, Duke University, Box 90248, Durham, North Carolina 22708, USA.

Design for Partnership

As partnership between government and NGOS becomes more widespread in India, the MS. Swaminathan Research Foundation felt that it was time to discuss issues that are likely to arise as a result. It therefore organised a conference in which experiences of successful partnerships were shared by a number of NGOS. The experiences recounted were not only on the area of child care, but also on literacy, health, and gender issues. *Design for Partnership* is a collection of these experiences. The publication is divided into four main sections: the Challenges; the Context; the Experiences; and the Outcomes: Design for Partnership. The last section broadens the concept of 'partnership' so that it is not only limited to that between NGOS and government, but also includes community structures and local bodies. It reiterates that trust and flexibility are two essential factors necessary for the sustainability of partnership, and then goes on to look at partnership strategies. Though this publication is particular to the situation in India, it is also useful for policy-makers and staff members of NGOS and government in other locations.

M.S. Swaminathan Research Foundation, Third Cross Road, Taramani Institutional Area, Madras 600 113, India. Tel: +91.44.2351229/2351698. Fax: +91.44.2351319.
E-mail:mmsrf.madras@sm8.sprintrpg.sprint.com, or MDSAAA51@giasmd01.vsnl.net.in.

Bernard van Leer
Foundation
Newsletter
Number 84 October 1996

Children touched by violence

children have a right to expect loving care from their parents (Nicaragua)

Violence takes many forms, and can be seen as a continuum that starts with a slap given to a child through to the worst kinds of devastating violence that children suffer in war. And it appears to have a similarly wide range of causes: social injustice, marginalisation, poverty, ignorance, the dynamics of society, discrimination, political systems, attitudes towards women and so on. While projects and organisations working on the 'frontline' provide valuable experiences, most of the available research on violence and children comes from American and European sources. Though the settings of the projects and the research may be different, there are sufficient similarities between them to draw parallels.

Any projects working in disadvantaged areas increasingly have to cope with violence in the course of their work. Because of this the Foundation is interested to learn from the projects that it supports and others about the issues at stake, and about ways of effectively working with children and their families and communities in situations of violence. We welcome any ideas or experiences that you may wish to contribute: and will also consider them for publication in future *Newsletters*.

In this edition, we look at violence, and its physical and psychological effects, in the family, in child care centres and schools, and in the community.

The home – a safe haven?

> … families constitute the training ground for aggression. If families do not instil non-violent values in their children, those children are more likely to develop violent behaviours as they become adults.[1]

This quote reinforces the fact that homes can be poles apart. For most children they are a haven of love, happiness, and security; but for a disturbing

In this issue

Children touched by violence: some of the ways that children experience violence and are affected by it; together with ways of dealing with it

With contributions from **Jamaica** *page 4*, **South Africa** *page 6*, **Mexico** *page 8*, **Thailand** *page 8*, **Venezuela** *page 11*, **Nicaragua** *page 13*

Network News *page 14*

Reports from the field: Europe anti-bias training in the early years *p16*; **Australia:** Aboriginal pre-school teacher training *page19*; **Malaysia** training project *page 20*; **Zambia:** the environment and messy play *page 21*

PS 026632

minority, a chamber of pain and fear. Within some, extreme physical and psychological abuse of children may occur. Also, although most people abhor beating children to make them comply, smacking is readily accepted and is even seen as good for children. This is despite the fact that the literature seems to suggest that 'physical punishment may produce obedience in the short-term, but continued over time it tends to increase the probability of aggressive and violent behaviour during childhood and adulthood …'.[2]

So, can any form of violence be justified? Especially if physical punishment of children for a misdemeanour gives them the messages that first, adults may do what they like with their bodies and second, that it is acceptable to deal aggressively with a person or situation. Research also suggests that children become accustomed to physical punishment and after a while it is no longer a deterrent:

> Harsh physical punishment has proven to be ineffective in helping children gain firm inner controls. Physical abuse increases children's anger, making it harder for them to control themselves.[3]

Awareness that physical punishment is wrong

Children's and adults' perceptions of physical punishment seem to differ. A survey carried out by the *Los Cumiches* project in Nicaragua shows that corporal punishment is commonplace: 45 per cent of the children interviewed claimed that they are punished by being hit with sticks, belts and other objects. But only 16 per cent of the parents admitted to it. If the children are to be believed, many parents did not admit to using corporal punishment, presumably because they felt it to be wrong. This is supported by 64 per cent of the parents stating they used verbal restraints and punishments because these were less likely to result in physical or psychological damage.[4] Therefore, despite practice, people are aware that hitting children is wrong or harmful.

Aspects of a 'toxic society'

'If firearms kept people safe, the United States would be the safest country in the world. … Instead, we are the most violent industrialised country in the world.'

- In 1990 guns were used to kill 222 children younger than 10 years. Another 30 children are injured every day by guns.
- Prime time television depicts an act of violence every five minutes.
- Over 100,000 children carry guns into school each day.
- In some inner-city areas, all children have witnessed a shooting before the age of 5.

'If all they (children) see is young men with guns setting the normative standards in their communities they will naturally accept those standards as their own.'

'It's a sad state of affairs in this country when starting in kindergarten we need to teach our children their ABCs, but more importantly what to do when they hear shots or see people pointing guns.'

Yet children are often given guns as toys and are encouraged to play with them.

(various sources)

Although it is impossible to guess the extent of physical punishment in the home worldwide, the Children's Defense Fund found that in the USA '2.7 million children were reported to child protection agencies in 1991'.[5] These may be the cases of extreme harsh treatment and severe bodily harm, but where do you draw the line once a hand is raised to a child?

Environments of violence

Even when the home is a haven of love, happiness and security for children, the reality beyond the front door may be quite different. Garbarino[6] refers to parts of the USA as a 'toxic society': a social context in which it is 'poisonous' to bring up children because of beatings, shootings, the effects of drugs, violent television and so on. And these 'poisonous' social contexts are to be found all over the world. In the USA, as in many other countries, the impact of violence on children is a major cause of concern (see box on this page). Chronic violence is often centred in inner-city areas – or 'inner-city war zones'[7] – and affects the whole community. The causes of inner-city violence are believed to be rooted in poverty, and factors such as racism, unemployment, and low self-esteem. The costs to families are high:

> … parents who are living with violence frequently describe a sense of helplessness and frustration with their inability to protect their children. The constant barrage of violence in the community may lead parents to communicate helplessness and hopelessness to their children.[8]

All in all, the pressure and conditions of life in slums finds an outlet in violence in many countries, as is clearly shown in the experiences of projects in Mexico, Thailand and Jamaica (see pages 4, 5, 8).

And to add to an already very complex picture, particular groups of children find particular sorts of violence directed against them. For example, during the last decade evidence from Latin America tells of street children being victims of operations by death squads paid to 'clean-up' the city streets. Most of these children are in their early teens, but many are as young as five or six years old.

Violence in centres and schools

The US Department of Education estimates that every year 30,000 children in US schools are hurt badly enough by corporal punishment to require medical treatment[9]: one can only wonder at the extent of corporal punishment in schools all over the world. Corporal punishment means that for many children schools must be places of dread, and this hardly gives them a good start in life or encourages them to socialise and learn. Furthermore, 'When adults who teach and care for children use corporal punishment, they teach children that hurting others is an acceptable way to control the behaviour of others.'[10] In addition, many children are abused, tormented, bullied, and humiliated in schools and centres.

Schools can also be dangerous places in themselves with the presence of guns, gangs, and drugs, and it sometimes seems that there is little that staff can do:

> Children understand that the adults who control the school are powerless to protect them. School is too often the child's learning ground about the impotence of adult authority when it comes to violence.[11]

above: providing safe spaces in which young children can grow helps to protect them from violence (Kwandebele Project, South Africa)

Not unnaturally, as children clearly see that they get no protection from adults, they devise ways of protecting themselves ... some of which may well be violent.

Even when schools do provide a safe haven, getting to and from school can be threatening: the children may encounter gang warfare, get caught up in crossfire or fights, or be exposed to drugs. The South Side project in Jamaica tells how parents sometimes keep their children at home for fear of their being injured. But the tension and frustration that this causes can in itself lead to violence in the home (see pages 4, 5).

Finally, inner-city areas or shanty towns have the least resources which, in addition to the lack of safety, means that the centres and schools in these areas are seldom able to attract good quality staff. When this comes on top of irregular attendance by children, controlling violence is difficult, learning is severely limited, and the cycle of poverty and violence is likely to be continued.

What does violence do to children?

For many children, violence 'only' causes them immediate short term pain and distress: they are resilient to it. However, those children who are affected more deeply can suffer very serious consequences:

> A recent review of the backgrounds of a large sample of children who have killed or committed other grave (usually violent) crimes found that 72 per cent had experienced abuse ...

Some children who have gone through traumas as a result of violence may show changes of behaviour in what has been called 'post traumatic stress disorder syndrome'. The symptoms vary between cultures but include changes in behaviour, withdrawal, aggression, clinging, bedwetting, passivity, nightmares, sleep and eating disorders, lack of expectations for the future, and so on. Now, however, it is increasingly recognised that children who endure continual physical or emotional stress exhibit collections of these symptoms too.

Furthermore, as the above quote suggests, children who are victims are at risk of being further victimised or of becoming aggressors at a later stage. This seems to be partly because aggressive or victimised young children do not easily form relationships with their peers and adults. As a result, they may face loneliness and lack support from those around them which in turn may worsen their behaviour and lower their self-esteem.

right: poverty doesn't necessarily condemn young children to violence ... but it can produce stresses and strains within families and communities that encourage its growth (Pacomin Project, Venezuela)

Battling against violence – treatment

> The basis for all work with children who are at risk ... is through relationships ... so that the children can alter their views of the world and of themselves.

Working with damaged children to help them overcome their experiences of violence can be a long and arduous task. The older the child, the more difficult it can be to undo the damage as 'children of violence see the world as a hostile place and as they get older they arm themselves'. In cases of physical abuse, there may be telltale signs – such as bruising or broken bones – that indicate a problem. But some signs of physical or psychological violence are extremely subtle and require the diagnosis of observant and caring adult who knows the individual child well. Some children may even need professional help from psychologists, psychiatrists, or teachers to complement the efforts that their families make.

If the key is in caring relationships and helping children trust adults and believe in their own futures, work must be done with families and within communities to make sure these are possible. Studies of children who have come through traumatic experiences as well-balanced individuals suggest that a relationship with a stable and caring older person is essential. Although nothing will take their experiences of violence or abuse away, love, trust and care can be a balm in children's healing.

Battling against violence – protection

In situations of violence it is important to provide children with a place where they feel safe, and emotional 'space' where they feel safe. Parents' roles in this are of key importance, but they may need training or support in this and, in exceptional cases, their experiences may need to be supplemented or even replaced by caregivers. In addition, the experiences of projects in Thailand, Mexico and Jamaica (pages 4, 5, 8) clearly show that parents benefit from having

contact with other parents and knowing that others share similar circumstances.

One approach that seems to be effective is for parents, caregivers and early childhood workers to talk about violence with the children. It is also important that children's fears are expressed and not ignored because violence is a difficult subject or because parents don't want to upset the children. Children have to know that they can rely on adults who will support them. This helps them to grow up learning to trust other people and to deal with problems positively.

Hand in hand with this is children's need to be taken seriously. This is apparent in the work of the Psychosocial enrichment of children project in South Africa (see page 6). Here older teenagers, most of whom have grown up in environments of violence, have responsibility for forming close relationships with pre-school children and guiding them through the violent environment in which they are growing. The project reaches two generations of children at once, something that should help to prevent the perpetuation of the cycle of violence. Part of the work involves learning conflict resolution skills at a young age so that children learn constructive behaviour for coping with violence.

Battling against violence – prevention

If violence is to be confronted seriously, wide scale programmes have to be developed to reduce its incidence. This means work within families, within communities and across societies.

At the family level, child care workers can help parents with learning non-violent ways of disciplining their children so that they become a model for their children. In this way children are encouraged towards non-aggressive behaviour. Approaches like this are obvious in the *Si a la vida, No a la violencia y muerte de jóvenes* (Yes to life, No to violence and the death of young people) programme in Venezuela but this is only a part of a much wider initiative (see page 11). However, some of the problems that can arise are made clear by the experiences in Mexico: although goodwill on the part of parents may be there, the necessary energy levels and skills may not be, given the daily struggle for survival.

Within violent communities it is essential, if possible, to provide safe places in which children can experience alternatives to violence. For example, in homes, centres or communal places the arrangement of an area can stimulate positive social interaction between children: games and creative activities encourage social interaction, while crayons or clay modelling encourage isolated play. Equally, structure in the day is important as children need to know what is expected of them and what their boundaries are. As they start understanding and cooperating with these rules they start to develop inner controls, and that can help them to avoid being violent and being subjected to violence in the future. These safe places and activities create 'space' in attitudes and approaches which allow children to grow up in supportive, caring surroundings.

Within violent societies, programmes have to bring about substantial changes to reduce the levels of violence while protecting children until change is achieved. Among many achievements, the Yes to life, no to violence programme referred to above has influenced the drafting of laws to protect children; has generated mechanisms to allow parents to seek safe facilities and better services for their

Jamaica: giving something back

by Frances Madden

The South Side project, run by Grace and Staff Community Development Foundation – a voluntary non-profit organisation – works with parents and children in low-income communities in South Side, Kingston. Most of the families are single headed households. These communities have all the characteristics of a ghetto: overcrowded housing conditions, rampant unemployment, child abuse and few educational opportunities for children. Any work in this area is often hampered by violence, leading to occasional suspension of activities. Frances Madden is a social worker working with the South Side project.

Violence is prevalent in these South Side communities. These are poor communities, with overcrowding, unemployment and all the resultant problems. There are killings on a daily basis. There are gangs who fight for 'turf'; there is rivalry for turf and for drugs. Even young teenagers are involved in drugs and in shootings.

The violence affects everybody, even those who are not directly involved. Children and teenagers drop out of school because they are afraid of actually going to and from school, and schools close because of the violence. Sometimes the parents or siblings of the children are killed. People are afraid to be out on the streets and they don't want to get involved. They are afraid of seeing crimes and fear for their lives if they tell the authorities.

The violence keeps the children indoors all day, which leads to frustration for them and their parents. Many parents are victims of the violence and frustration in the community. This pushes some of them to become perpetrators in their own homes, behaving aggressively towards their own children. Many of the children are traumatised and this is evident in their behaviour. They show symptoms of disturbance such as bed wetting among older children, clinging behaviour or aggression. But parents generally do not understand their children's behaviour and punish them for it. They do not understand when their children are [illegible] to them in front of the [illegible]. They beat them and push them into the school. They don't understand that the children have seen, for example, a family member [illegible] violence and are afraid of losing another.

Children growing up in these circumstances become unable to rationalise. They have a warped view of life and [illegible] for it. Their attitude is, 'What does it matter whether you die today or tomorrow? Die you will.' They have an inability to concentrate and learn. By 15 years old they are very badly affected, and can be very difficult to work with.

children; and has convinced national newspapers that they have a responsibility to carry educational material for parents and communities. But, just as newspapers may carry educational materials, so they may also contribute indirectly to some forms of violence. An example is that of desirable consumer goods that are widely advertised but remain out of reach. As well as the resultant tensions and conflicts within families this helps to generate, and the clear implications for levels of violence, reports tell of children killing or maiming each other for a pair of shoes or item of clothing. It is asking a huge effort of parents in these situations, but they can counter the messages of the advertising industry by trying to reduce the importance that children place on material goods. However, one of the reasons that children put a high value on these is their need to 'belong' to a group. And they also need to know that they are wanted and loved – which parents try to demonstrate by buying them the very things they cannot afford.

Changing attitudes

Developing non-aggressive skills in parents and children is widely held to be useful. But people may have to function within a wider community or society that may well be violent. What can be done in a situation where the behaviour of the individual is outweighed by that of the group? There is no easy answer to this, because a drastic change in attitudes to violence in all areas of society is needed. Though this is a long process, what may help would be if we put aside our prejudices; if governments put children as top priority; if the media put forward unbiased, positive images; if those working with children are aware of their importance as role models and promote non-aggressive behaviour in children; if communities and authorities work together for the same goals; and so on. These may not be concrete actions, but the causes that give rise to violence in people are extremely subtle – as are the ways of improving the situation in the long term. ❑

Working in South Side

The South Side project works with parents and children. For the community at large we run community education sessions and discussions on violence and its causes. There is much discussion on why violence happens. The programme also looks at how to best cope with the situation and how to cope with violence. For parents we run monthly sessions which are received enthusiastically. Up to 60 parents attend. All sorts of topics are discussed from dealing with children to the possibilities of moving away from the violence. It is important that the parents feel that they can discuss a range of issues not only with us but with other parents.

The work with children involves talking to them and listening to their experiences. Listening to the children and taking their fears seriously is very important for them. The project runs a programme for 10 to 18 year olds between 3 and 6 in the afternoon that serves several functions. It keeps children off the streets and in safety for the duration; they receive help with their homework if they wish; and they can talk about their problems and situations. The children are very cooperative and enthusiastic, and above all they feel safe in the centre. They even want to stay in the centre and, during exam periods, they may do so if they wish. Our programme provides them with a safe place to study and with food. In this centre they also help each other and become study partners.

New approaches

The project's work with the community is new. There has always been work with the community through the years by a number of organisations but what our project is doing is new: we are talking to the "gangs on the corners". Skills training courses have always been available to the gang members, but they either don't enroll in them or else they drop out. Now we are trying to learn about them so that we can offer them realistic opportunities. Slowly, slowly and very quietly we are approaching the gangs to talk about their problems and hopes. We gradually talk to them about further learning, opportunities and a different way of life. We are also working with the police to search for alternative approaches. We have found that the young men receive the project's approaches with enthusiasm and that they clamour for education.

Although this work is hard, we are positive that the project is moving in the right direction in its work with the children and the families. We begin to see children going from one educational level up to another. Some youngsters are even going into higher education and returning to the community or the project to put something back in.

* "Turf" is a person's area or sphere of influence.

Notes

1. 'Violence – direction for Australia', National Committee on Violence, Australian Institute of Criminology, Canberra, 1990, quoted in *Children and violence, Report of the Commission on Children and Violence* convened by the Gulbenkian Foundation, London, 1995.

2. *Violence and youth: psychology's response*, vol. 1, Summary Report of the American Psychological Association Commission on Violence and Youth, American Psychological Association, Washington DC, 1993

3. Wallach, L.B., 'Breaking the cycle of violence', in *Children Today*, vol 23 no. 3 1994-5, US Department of Health and Human Services, Washington DC

4. *Resultados de la investigación sobre la incidencia de la familia en la formación de la infancia* (Results of an investigation into the effects of the family on how children develop), *Los Cumiches* project, Ciudad Sandino, Nicaragua, 1995

5. Children's Defense Fund 1992 as quoted from NAEYC position statement on *Violence in the lives of children*, brochure no. 588, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Washington DC, 1994

6. Garbarino J., *Raising children living in a socially toxic environment*, Jossey Bass Inc., San Francisco, 1995

7. Slaby R.G., Roedell W.C., Arezzon D. and Hendrix K., *Early violence prevention: tools for teachers of young children*, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Washington DC, 1995

8. Osofsky, J.D., 'The effects of exposure to violence on young children', in *American Psychologist*, September 1995, New York

9. Slaby R.G., Roedell W.C., Arezzon D. and Hendrix K., *Early violence prevention: tools for teachers of young children*, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Washington DC, 1995

10. Slaby R.G., Roedell W.C., Arezzon D. and Hendrix K., *Early violence prevention: tools for teachers of young children*, National Association for the Education of Young Children, Washington DC, 1995

11. Canada G., *Fist stick knife gun*, Beacon Press, Boston MS, 1995

12. *Children and violence: Report of the Commission on Children and Violence* convened by the Gulbenkian Foundation, London, 1995

13. Wallach, L.B., 'Breaking the cycle of violence', in *Children Today*, vol 23 no. 3 1994-5, Washington DC

14. *Carnegie Quarterly*, vol. xxxix no. 2, spring 1994, New York

Children touched by violence

South Africa: countering violence through psycho-social enrichment

This article is taken from a report covering the first years of operation of the 'Pyscho-social enrichment of children' project that is operated by the University of Witwatersrand's Department of Psychology.

The project aims to foster the psycho-social development of young primary school children and of unemployed youths in Eldorado Park, near Johannesburg, both as an end in itself and as a means of confronting some of the basic problems of the area. In order to achieve this, the project uses the untapped potential of the youths while helping them to become positive role models for younger children. Final year psychology students of the University act as mentors/leaders who also oversee and supervise the work, and record it.

Much of the urban environment of South Africa is determined by large scale violence that has been called a 'low intensity war' and the project's work has highlighted the degree and extent of that violence while also finding mechanisms for countering it.

The 'Psycho-social enrichment of children' project aims to identify and respond to the psycho-social needs of young children and adolescents. In doing this it initially built on the experience, energy and sense of humanity of a group of adolescent males who had failed to find a role in their communities. These people are called 'Big Buddies' because they have become dependable and supportive friends and role models for the groups of young children that the project has prepared them to work with.

The project thus has two parallel lines of development. The first centres on psycho-social enrichment of the young children – called 'Little Buddies' – by providing them with a safer development environment in which they had many more opportunities for growth. The second empowers the Big Buddies and consolidates their sense of their own worth by transforming them from what had been regarded as a problem group, into a high energy and respected community resource. At the same time, the intention is that the Big Buddies acquire parenting skills which will assist them in their roles in later life, so helping to break the cycles of family dysfunction which characterize many deprived communities.

Identifying the needs

The starting point of the project was to encourage the Big Buddies to air their views about the problems and needs of children in their communities, and about how these might be addressed. This required a great deal of research linked to close collaboration between the mentors – psychology students from the University – and the Big Buddies; and between the Big Buddies and the children who they would work with.

In the workshops organised around these issues the Big Buddies were encouraged to discuss their own childhood experiences and current life situation. At first, they were very reluctant to do this, showing all the characteristic splits which are endemic in South African society, and they were also suspicious of the project's intentions. As a result, they took refuge in overly compliant passive attitudes. However, as the coordinators themselves continued to resist the temptation to provide answers (largely because they did not have them), the youth began to own the project more and to generate ideas, both on the issues that children in their community face, and on how they themselves might be of assistance.

In the Alexandra township 20 per cent of final year school students had suffered assault, [illegible] had witnessed assault and 70 per cent has witnessed a [illegible].

There is also a large amount of corporal punishment in schools and very hard discipline in many homes. This shades into abuse. Abuse of spouses is also common, and substance abuse and gang warfare contribute to a general context of violence in the country.

70 per cent of 14 to 16 year olds interviewed in Eldorado Park felt that South Africa was still not at peace because of the high crime rate, gang warfare and fighting between political groups.

Big Buddies and violence

Early in the project, the Big Buddies identified violence, both within families and within the community, as a major issue that urgently needed attention. They recognised that violence colours or even shapes lives, perhaps partly because they have seen it, have suffered it and inflicted it on others. This first hand knowledge and understanding also made them especially adept at participating in processes to identify ways of countering violence and coping with its effects. They spoke of the impact violence has on self-esteem and self-image, and of the need to help children to overcome their fears and insecurities. In this regard they saw the value of providing children with alternative adult support and they began to see that they had the potential to make a contribution themselves.

As work between the mentors, the Big Buddies and the Little Buddies progressed, what has emerged is a programme that acknowledged the impact of violence but did not deal with it in isolation. Instead the approach was to look at ways in which violence could be reduced or its affects softened by offering alternatives. The most obvious way in which this was achieved was through gaining the commitment of the Big Buddies and channelling their energies into positive activities for and with young children.

Working cooperatively, the project coordinators encouraged the Big Buddies to use games, drama and creative toys that they themselves had used in childhood, and to work with themes that would boost the confidence and self-esteem of the children. It was stressed that the involvement of the children in the process was of more importance than the quality of the end product – a perspective that was foreign to them given their own exposure to the very rigid schooling system that still features in South African life.

Preparing the Big Buddies

In the first year, in order to facilitate the Big Buddies' interaction with the children, a number of problem-solving type workshops were organised. These covered a wide range of basic skills from understanding children's communications, through understanding developmental issues, to devising strategies for helping troubled children.

Flowing from these came theme-centred play activities for the Big Buddies to use with the children.

These included:

- story telling sessions in which the characters had similar problems to those of the children;
- participatory puppet making work shops and performances;
- a sports day in which both competitive and cooperative events were structured;
- a drawing and painting event in which the children were encouraged to draw themselves and their families, and to talk about their family relationships; and
- numerous experiential activities aimed at developing children's awareness of their bodies, their emotions, and their place in the world.

These activities were implemented in the first year with the Big Buddies working one day a week with a group of five Little Buddies each. They were repeated in the second year during which time adolescent females joined the Big Buddies (see note). Additional workshops were also devised to deal specifically with the practical aspects of issues that had emerged. The workshops dealt with:

- facilitating group skills, including problem solving and chairing meetings;
- understanding, exposing and dealing with violence, anger and frustration;
- and mediation skills.

Outcomes

One clear effect is that the community has recognised the importance of the work: there is a clamour for more of it and for greater community ownership.

At the personal level, parents saw that their children had greater self-confidence, self-esteem and self-awareness. They reported happier children who enjoyed better relationships with others, had a growing ability to share and a diminishing need to fight, who showed increased self-confidence and self-awareness, and had developed an enhanced ability to discern between right and wrong.

Teachers are also enthusiastic noting that the Little Buddies could interact more easily with others, had developed cultural awareness and were good at learning through playing. Attitudes had also changed: the children are more confident, willing to undertake leadership roles, have greater self-esteem and are very confident in peer relationships.

The Little Buddies themselves were formally assessed through the DAP (Draw a Person) and the CAT (Children's Appreciation Test). As the example in the box shows, quite dramatic changes are apparent.

Finally the Big Buddies expressed their views about how the programme had affected them:

> I learned that everyone has trust and must share it with others. I also saw that I am not so shy anymore.
>
> I learned to be responsible. At first I could not play with children and find them boring.
>
> I changed from aggressiveness to assertiveness. I wasn't shy anymore.
>
> Children are very curious. Children are trustworthy. Children are vulnerable. Children are different. Children are energetic. Children are reliable. Children are loving. ┘

Individual follow up assessment

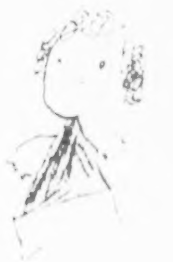
Before the Project

The Little Buddies's drawings at the beginning of the programme tended to be small, constricted and placed on the edges of the page. This is indicative of low self esteem, poor self confidence and insecurity. The general theme of the drawing also suggested a high level of neediness and deprivation, and a sense of inadequacy.

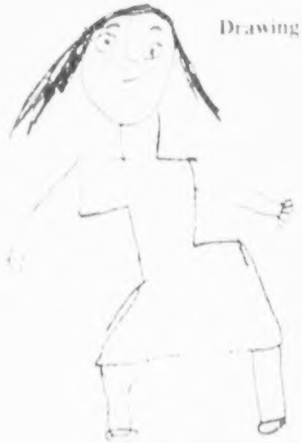
After the Project

The drawings at the end of the programme are typically bigger, centrally placed and more detailed. This tends to suggest that there has been an increase in self-confidence and self-esteem. Feelings of efficacy appear to be stronger and the drawings suggest a higher level of emotional maturity. There seems to be an increase in autonomy as well as an improved ability to relate to others and to the environment.

Drawing Before



Drawing After



---

* During the second year young women were drawn into the project as well. We hope to include another article about other aspects of this project in a future *Newsletter*.

Children touched by violence

Mexico: from a culture of violence to a culture of respect

Clementina Carbajal

The author is Director of the Foundation-supported *Escuela de la vida* Project (School of life Project) of the *Centro de educacion infantil* (Centre for the education of young children). The project operates in seven marginalised neighbourhoods of Mexico City and targets children at home who do not benefit from any early childhood programme.

This article is drawn from work by 10 groups that work with young children in Mexico City, and discusses violence as it is perceived and dealt with.

When we speak of violence and abuse, we cannot avoid speaking about the factors that precipitate them: ignorance, low self-esteem, the economic crisis, marginalisation and extreme poverty.

The family is the place wherein one expects to feel protected although reality sometimes tells us the opposite – for example, we encounter mothers who express their love and authority in the harsh ways that they themselves experienced and may still suffer from. Parallel to this are fathers under the burden of a society that advocates macho (tough, excessively masculine) behaviour, who are taught that the family is their private property and that they can do whatever they like with it.

Added to these are television programmes full of blood and violence that are shown from dusk to dawn and in which the strongest win, and fictional criminals and wrong-doers are made into heroes. This is an unscrupulous way for broadcasters to increase popularity and profitability.

Labelling instead of understanding

Alcoholism, drug addiction, the environment, the lack of recreational space, and aggression within families are additional factors that, day to day, create a culture of violence and abuse. But unfortunately, the children who suffer from them often find themselves labelled as 'problem children' by society and the community – including schools: there's a failure to recognise the underlying causes.

We seek refuge to protect ourselves instead of seeing that we are all responsible for creating this culture; and that passively allowing it to continue is also a form of violence and abuse because it restricts our liberty and our right to live together in harmony.

Those most at risk

Children up to 14 years old are the most affected section of Mexican society. In its 1994 report, COMEXANI (an association of Mexican non-

Thailand: fostering family harmony

by Suthathib Thajchayapong

The Foundation for Slum Child Care (FSCC) runs programmes in 20 slum areas in and around the capital city, Bangkok. Though each has its own unique set of characteristics, some characteristics are shared. This article looks at FSCC's Nongkhaem project, which is supported by the Foundation, in the slum area surrounding the garbage dump at Nongkhaem, around 40 km outside Bangkok. The harsh environment here leads to family stress which in turn gives rise to domestic violence. The FSCC Nongkhaem project is trying to take preventive action by encouraging family harmony – a value once central to the traditional Thai family structure.

There are an estimated 1,500 slums in and around Bangkok city which house migrants from the rural areas of the north and north-east. The inhabitants of the 20 that are described in this article earn a living from the garbage dump, collecting items for recycling and scavenging. The living conditions are very bad – unsanitary and over crowded – and the people very poor. The government has a policy of burning garbage dumps or moving them elsewhere, thus eliminating the residents' ability to earn and leaving them poorer than before. Many families drift between their place of origin in the rural areas and the city in attempts to find a living in either place. They therefore form a highly unstable and mobile population.

The low income, terrible living conditions, and instability lead to parental stress which is often a cause of violence. The stress often causes relationships to split up easily. 30 to 40 per cent of mothers head single parent households. Alcohol abuse among the men lead to high levels of violence towards women and children. Though we can't see into the future we are sure that this will have negative psychological effects on the children in the long term.

We run five day care centres for the under-fives in the slums that we work in. The women who look after the infants come from the surrounding community. Although much of the work in the centres is to provide a safe and stimulating environment for the children, we also do health checks. The poor conditions in which many families live make it difficult to ensure that the young children receive adequate nutrition.

All our work with the children involves close work with the families. We run family camps in which we take families camping to the beach. We go away for three days during which we try to foster good and positive relations between the parents and between the parents and children. The purpose of the camps is to encourage the family to operate as a harmonious unit. Here the parents can temporarily forget their daily struggle and concentrate on enjoying each other. They can take

governmental organisations with an extensive programme of work for disadvantaged children) reported that, in a recent survey in Mexico City, 31 per cent of the very youngest children, 30 per cent of 6 year olds, 27 per cent of school children over 7 years old, and 6 per cent of adolescents suffer physical and/or psychological abuse.

And it is within the family that most of this is happening: 36 per cent of children have suffered abuse by their mothers, 22 per cent by their fathers, 9 per cent by both parents, 17 per cent by step-parents, and 6 per cent by aunts or uncles. Only 6 per cent have suffered assaults from others.

Psychological abuse is not always immediately evident (although children also exhibit attitudes that reflect abandonment and neglect) physical abuse often is: bruising, cuts and abrasions, injuries and even, in extreme but not infrequent cases, death.

We also have to remember that aggression does not just leave an immediate mark but helps to shape children's characters and determine their personalities. The shouting, pain, denigrating words, confinement, lack of attention, negligence – and the labelling of them as 'problems' – are forms of violence and abuse that lower children's self-esteem and restrict their development.

What to do?

When working with problems like these, the first step is to have a clear understanding of the realities. The Colony of Tlatel Xochitenco in the zone of Chimalhuacan, Mexico City, provides a typical example of how violence pervades children's environments, with many examples of the sorts of elements that contribute to what is really a culture of violence.

This is an extremely poor place – although, of course, it is not only among the poor that there is violence against children. But the consequence of poverty is that the population is obliged to live, work and play in a completely unhealthy and badly contaminated environment that amounts to a junk heap. There are severe drug and alcohol related

---

these memories back with them and in times of high family stress family members have something to look back to, remembering the good times and the pleasure that they had with each other during the camping trip. For this reason we call this the 'Happy Time' programme.

During the camps there are activities for the parents to do together, for the children to do together, and for the parents and children to do together. The children make presents for their parents that express affection, and the parents learn how to make toys for their children. This programme has been running for four years and is going well.

We also run other camps for children suffering from malnutrition and their parents, and camps for single mothers. We have found that separating the groups enables the participants to focus on specific issues. All the camping trips are free for the families.

There is follow up of the families once they are back at their homes. The camps have usually created a network among the parents that enables them to turn to each other to share experiences, difficulties and solutions. Sharing problems and expressing their feelings help parents cope in a non-aggressive way with the situations that arise daily. We also run home-visiting programmes for the families of the children in the day care centres. The mothers are encouraged to record the progress of their children in books, which helps them think more about their children and to get to know them.

The first priority

The programme is encouraging the parents to gradually start thinking about their children as their first priority. With all the difficulties that the parents have to simply survive, the children are the third or fourth priority.

The violence outside the home and in the neighbourhood in general affects the over-fives especially as they are the ones that have to journey from home to the school premises and back again. They see the hardness of life in the slums, the drugs, the addicts, the abuse and so on. Drugs are a serious problem, and their presence makes it very difficult for our staff to work. We have a youth programme to try to keep 9 to 15 year olds in school where it is safer for them than out on the streets.

There is some physical and sexual abuse of women and children in the slum. Sexual abuse is an area that we are just starting to work on. At the moment we are training staff to perform a 'watch dog' function with families where the abuse takes place, but we realise that this is not a solution. Therefore we are thinking about ways of designing a preventive home visiting programme for the future in order to reduce the occurrence of abuse cases in the slum areas.

It is very difficult to tell whether our programmes have any impact on the community in the slums. When we talk to parents they tell us good and positive things, but in private they may not entirely practice what they say. However, we have to continue our work for the purpose of ensuring that slum children have as good a chance as possible to receive good care within their families.

above: offering alternatives on the street – a safe space in which to grow creatively

right: violence may pervade the environment but the project finds plenty of ways of combatting its effects

problems and these cause children to be abandoned, and to be assaulted physically and mentally. Inevitably this affects their development; while prospects for improving their quality of life seem hopeless.

Yet, asking their parents what they want for their children, produces responses such as 'I want them to learn, so that they don't become donkeys like me, and so they can progress and earn plenty of money.' But parents also admit that they 'don't know how to help them.'

It is not hard to see why they don't know what to do: their efforts go into surviving from day to day; they cannot read or write; they are not used to reflecting about the situations they live in nor to finding solutions to their problems; and they have no concept of a different way of life. I believe this comes from a lack of formal education, from a lack of exposure to different cultures and from low self-esteem.

The second step in combatting violence is to recognise that there is no easy or quick solution. It is a slow process that needs a collective effort by the community, the families and professionals such as school teachers and psychologists. The aim is the creation of a self-help network that is fully informed about children's development needs and that develops viable resources and strategies to meet them. One inevitable consequence of understanding children's needs is a recognition that violence must be eradicated from their lives.

Actions

The sorts of collective action that the *Escuela de la vida* project stimulate and support reflect a general drive to improve living conditions for children and their families, thus dealing with some of the fundamental causes of violence. Part of this necessarily includes promoting alternatives to present lifestyles, and enhancing self-esteem in everyone, for example by helping them to confront problems and find successful solutions to them.

Within Tlatel Xochitenco, collective action is also creating recreational and educational spaces – sometimes on the street corners where children gather; while parents are also encouraged to join in campaigns for better medical facilities for their children.

More direct work with and for children is also necessary. For example, it is important to distribute information about children's physical, psychological and social needs, and to make sure that it is understandable and usable. This involves home visits and workshops in which parents learn about the very practical things they can do to meet these needs.

The work with parents also includes showing them how their efforts can complement those of the formal education system. This means arranging parental visits to schools so teachers can share information and materials, and show parents the sorts of activities that will help children to develop healthily. These can then be practiced at home.

We know that this is a huge undertaking. But we believe that children are not only the future but also the present and that it is our responsibility to fight for a 'culture of respect for children'. ❏

Venezuela: spectators, victims, practitioners

Oscar Misle.

The author is the Communications Coordinator of *Centros Comunitarios de Aprendizaje* (CECODAP – Community Learning Centres) and has published extensively about early childhood development issues, drawing on many years of direct work in the field.

In this article he considers how children find out about violence and learn from what they see. He goes on to outline an approach to dealing with it in families and communities that was developed in 1993, and concludes with a review of the effectiveness of that approach.

The article is adapted from two articles that originally appeared in two Venezuelan newspaper – *El Universo* and *El Globo* – and that were reprinted in *Entre tu y yo: los derechos del niño y la familia desde lo cotidiano* (Between you and me: the rights of the child and family day to day). Misle O. (1993), ISBN 980 331 026 7, published by CECODAP, Apartado 63171, Caracas 1067A, Venezuela
Tel +58 02 951 4079
Fax +58 02 951 5841

In Venezuela, four million children under six years live daily with violence: they receive it in their homes from the television, on the streets and in their schools. They hear about it unceasingly from adults commenting about deaths, robberies and assaults. Violence has come to be a part of their normal existence. They learn what it is, how to commit it and, very frequently, they practice it in order to survive.

But they don't have the ability to assimilate it properly: they are too young to understand why these things happen. So they simply record them and internalise them, leaving them latent and hidden although in their memories, influencing what and how they learn, how they see, how they feel and what they do.

Violence can be very direct and may live and thrive in their families, in the centres they attend and in their schools. This can mean that relations with others result in physical, moral, psychological or sexual violence involving weapons, blows, words or attitudes.

And there is also a greater and crueller form of violence: the social violence which means that children who suffer poverty are deprived of the minimum attention necessary to ensure that they grow and develop healthily. They are victims of violence because they live in poor *barrios* (neighbourhoods) without space to play, without essential services and without the means to protest, raise awareness about their plight or express their needs. And they are victims because they are also exposed to the 'security' and 'protection' activities of heavily armed and aggressive police or guards who swarm into their *barrios* and houses.

La Ruta del
Año V Nº 20
Enero-Marzo 1995
Caracas, Venezuela
Dep. Legal pp 89-0183
ISSN 1315-4095
LA VIDA EN LOS PIES
ALTERNATIVAS FRENTE
A LA VIOLENCIA
de Aprendizaje

right: regular publications like this from CECODAP focus on key themes such as violence and bring together examples of effective current practice

The impact of violence

What do children learn when all the evidence shows them that they are not even safe in their own homes? What are their thoughts when they see that students or young people – possibly a neighbour or member of their own family – are struck, wounded or even killed because they have demanded a basic right? And what is the effect of seeing that no action is taken against corrupt and shameless people who seem to be immune from prosecution?

In 1993, faced with increasing violence, the *Coordinadora de Organizaciones de Atención al Niño* (CONGANI – the Coordinating Committee of Organisations working with Children) organised a forum called *Violencia comunitaria y los niños: ¿como enfrentarle?* (Community violence and children: how to deal with it). This involved many organisations and institutions that needed to exchange experiences and proposals; and gave an important impetus to *Si a la vida. No a la violencia y muerte de jóvenes* (Yes to life. No to violence and the death of young people), a national campaign that CONGANI was developing with UNICEF.

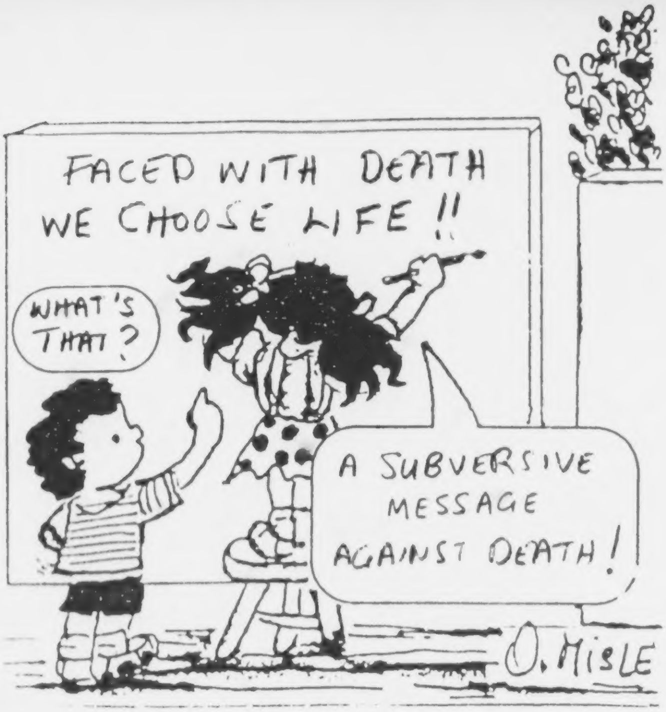
Sources of violence

The forum received an interim report of an investigation carried out by CONGANI that pointed to two key factors in accounting for increased violence such as homicide, and the injuring and wounding of children. The first was an increasing individualism resulting from an increasingly consumerist society; the second factor was the effects on the poorest of the structural adjustment programme that had been initiated in 1989.

It also heard from Dr Nancy Montero, the Director of Mental Health in the Ministry of Health. She argued that other factors had to be added to the results of the investigation. These included increases in the number of illegal firearms and in their use by young people; in the use of unpurified cocaine; in the number of children left alone at home while their parents worked; in the number of children used by adults to commit illegal acts because they were too young to be prosecuted if caught; and in the numbers of children who abandoned school.

Ways forward

During the forum, four lines of action were proposed. The first focused on the family because that is often where children first encounter violence.


FACED WITH DEATH WE CHOOSE LIFE !!
WHAT'S THAT ?
A SUBVERSIVE MESSAGE AGAINST DEATH !
O. MISLE

above and right: in many cultures humour is a highly effective way of making important points. CECODAP's Somos Noticia (We are news) *1994*

Ideas included: strengthening the family by helping reflection about family relationships and about the care that parents give their children; organising meetings in communities and between communities so that parents realise they aren't facing these problems alone; and putting a brake on violence by alleviating poverty. Although the last idea is ambitious, an expansion of the existing *Casas de la comunidad* (Community houses in which there are food cooperatives, low cost funeral services, training facilities, and so on) was expected to provide a realistic and practical starting point.

The second line of action centred on what schools for children of all ages could do to oppose violent attitudes in children. Ideas included: activities to stimulate self-esteem, team work and solidarity; changes to study programmes to make them more appropriate to the realities that children face; workshops about drug addiction and teenage pregnancy; meetings between children and teachers to resolve problems; and opening schools up to the community for complementary activities.

The third line of action was based on existing experience in one *barrio* and aimed to counter violence in the community. As well as a wider programme that includes trying to create jobs for the unemployed, it calls for collaboration with the police to counter drug trading and abuse; and identifying and classifying those who are using violence. These 'aggressors' are counselled and helped back into the community … or, if necessary, restrained from further violence.

Taking a more general view, the fourth line of action included advocacy for tougher penalties for those who force children into crime; and collaboration between law enforcement agencies and communities to guarantee the security of citizens. It is based on two simple truths: that joint action is effective; and that most people are good, honest and **hard working – it is the minority who inflict violence on the rest.**

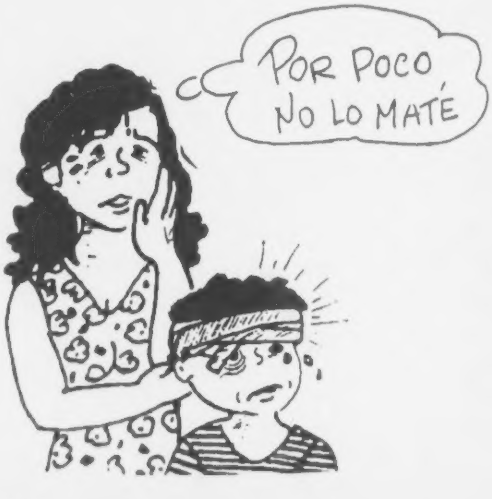
The outcomes so far

Since 1993, a wide range of activities has been initiated. For example one of the collaborations that the forum called for has led to organisations, institutions and agencies that work with young children making a strong contribution to a new law that is being prepared for presentation to Congress. This will generally guarantee the rights of children as they are expressed in the UN Convention on the Rights of the Child. However, there is a special emphasis on pre-school children, on meeting their needs and on providing complete protection against violence for them. It is based on the realities that children are facing, and so is practical rather than abstract.

A second key area of work has been the creation of networks that share information about how to work effectively with families, helping them – among many other things – to prevent violence both within the family and in communities. This work also includes enabling families to make their views known to the local government agencies that should provide services, support and protection. It's a form of popular advocacy in which agencies are sensitised to local needs.

The third key approach has been to enlist the support of national newspapers. Some now carry strip cartoons about the needs of young children, showing realities and problems on the one hand, solutions and good practices on the other. Others carry a page called *Aula* (classroom) which covers the same areas of concern in more detailed ways while also having an advocacy role.

These few examples indicate a complex and wide ranging body of work that reflects the extent and depth of the problem of violence against young children. In places where violence is endemic, that is the only way. ┘


POR POCO NO LO MATÉ

Children touched by violence

Nicaragua: violence within families

Raquel Fernandez

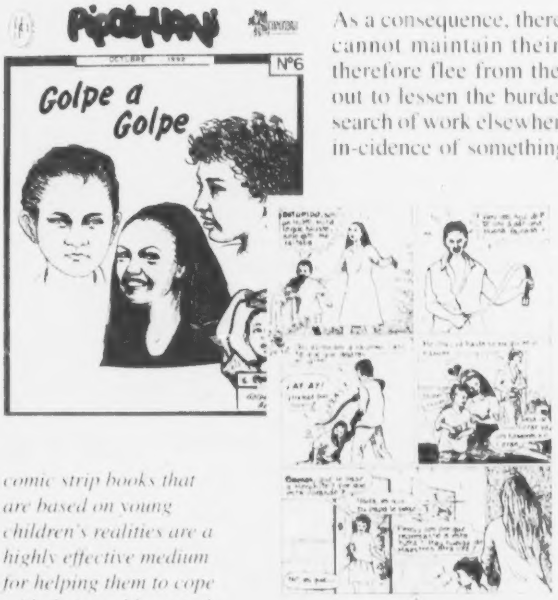
> Violence is always a form of exercising power by using physical, psychological, economic or political force. It implies the existence of a real or symbolic difference in level, for example as between complementary roles: father-son, husband-wife, employer-employee.
> (Dr Santiago Sequeira during the First National Conference 'Childhood, Adolescence and Violence', Managua, August 1995).

The author works in Managua – the capital of Nicaragua – as a member of the project team of the Foundation-supported *Los Cumiches* (The smallest ones) project of the *Centro de Educacion y Comunicacion Popular* (CANTERA – Centre of Popular Education and Communication).

In Nicaragua, violence is considered part of life and – within families – an effective mechanism to educate or control difficult children. However, there is horrendous institutionalised violence and war is still a daily reality.

Violence against boys and – even more often – against girls, most frequently takes place within families and is executed by a close relative. However, many of its roots lie far from the day to day life of the victims and can be found in such areas as the country's history, international relationships and interests, and Nicaragua's own special problems.

One clear root of violence is unemployment, another is poverty: it is estimated that more than 60 per cent of the population is unemployed or underemployed; while 70 per cent lives in poverty. Even for those with work, most salaries cover 40 per cent of the officially recognised basic needs.



comic strip books that are based on young children's realities are a highly effective medium for helping them to cope with their problems and find better ways forward

As a consequence, there are many men who cannot maintain their families and who therefore flee from them, who are thrown out to lessen the burden, or who depart in search of work elsewhere. This increases the in-cidence of something that is common in Nicaraguan society: families in which mothers head families, having to maintain them economically while fulfilling their maternal duties.

Women therefore have less time and energy to reason with their children so, if they do not obey immediately, they are severely punished – not to damage them, but for their own good, to ensure that they do it right next time.

In such circumstances, short cuts are taken. For example, if a little girl is frightened to get her fingers burned, the mother will burn the girl's fingers with hot coals to get her over the fear: a woman has to be able to cook.

Everybody accepts that the maternal decisions, beatings and whippings are for a girl's own good, to guarantee a good future for her. In fact, when girls grow up they are often convinced that those beatings have kept them on the right path and were proof of their mother's love for them. They do not question the old methods, let alone change them.

What can be done?

Violence is important in CANTERA's work and we have tried to find innovative ways of opening up specific topics that concern young people. One example is our series of strip cartoon books. The series includes several issues that deal with different forms of violence and abuse. To make the books, we work closely with the young people who are experiencing problems. Through discussions, we find out what is happening to them, then we tell their stories accurately and in a way that is easily accessible to them. But the work doesn't stop there: the publications also feature games, puzzles and ideas for further discussion with the young people concerned. In this way they are used to explore the topic and find solutions to the problems that are shown.

In the work of the *Los Cumiches* project, we rely very much on the insights of the *promotoras* (paraprofessional community workers) as they work with families. The job of the *promotoras* is to help children grow healthily in every respect and obviously violence militates against this. Because the *promotoras* work so closely with families, they can spot problems and help families to cope with them. Of course, they cannot solve the problem of poverty, but they can help families to manage more effectively and so reduce stress. And they can help families to understand that violence is bad and help them to find ways of reducing it – for example, by showing alternatives to physical punishment; and by bringing about negotiations between family members to reduce conflicts and tensions. Such work is, of course, very delicate and calls for careful training in intervention skills. The project provides this, reacting to the needs that the *promotoras* express. ┘

Network news

Argentina: reassessing the needs of rural families

In February 1995 the *Consejo Prelaticio de Pastoral* (COPREPAS – Prelatic Council of Ministry) of the Humahuaca area of Argentina met to consider the huge changes in social, religious, economic and political life that have occurred since the last major review of its work in 1982. One outcome was a decision to carry out a survey of the realities and needs of marginalised rural people; and to bring the results to a special Prelatic Assembly that could develop strategic interventions. This has now been done. The survey included children and young people, thus giving new insights into what happens within communities and families. Overall, it reconfirms the problem of endemic poverty and its inevitable consequences. For children this includes high infant mortality rates, malnutrition, the need to work rather than attend school, and so on.

However, the survey also offers a highly detailed picture of how people are personally affected – for example, they feel too timid to claim their rights, poor children know they are treated unequally by teachers, women left at home while men migrate for work suffer from loneliness, people have no one to discuss their problems with and this can result in suicide, and so on. The Prelatic Assembly was held in June 1996 and reviewed the successes and problems of previous work before considering the conclusions and proposed priorities and objectives of the report. It then established a detailed programme of work for the Foundation-supported *Yachay Programa* (The one who works) for indigenous Kolla children aged 0-8 years and their families.

Australia: 10 years of Hunter Caravan Project

In July, the Hunter Caravan Project marked its 10th birthday with a party to celebrate and to bring together people who have participated in and contributed to its success. The achievements of the project over the years have been extensively reported; while one of many outcomes is a national dissemination programme that shares the experiences and lessons of the project. This targets and tries to empower families with young children living in caravan parks; while government officials, early childhood professionals and caravan park owners and personnel in most other states are also addressed. As well as disseminating information, resources and publications, the programme researches, provides training, education and consultation. It also advocates for caravan park dwellers, who tend to be marginalised and disregarded. A second outcome is the establishment of the Family Action Centre at the University of Newcastle. The Centre takes a holistic view of the needs of families and young children and has a broad range of activities designed to discover needs and find ways of meeting them. Hunter Caravan Project's 10th anniversary party was also used as a fund raising event: guests were invited to become 'Friends of the Family Action Centre' – benefactors who can contribute skills, time or money to help the Centre become sustainable. For more information, please contact Di James, Family Action Centre, University of Newcastle, Newcastle, NSW 2308, Australia: Tel: +61 49 216 858/9; Fax: +61 49 216 934.

Australia: bush toy-making workshop

Recognising and reasserting the value of traditional toys is important culturally: it helps maintain or reestablish the distinct ways of child raising that have served many generations. It also makes sense economically: such toys are often made from materials that are freely available locally; while the pressure on parents to buy expensive toys of dubious developmental value is also reduced. In July, Michele Wilsher, Project Officer of the Aboriginal Teacher Training Project of Batchelor College near Darwin in north east Arnhem Land, facilitated a workshop about making toys from materials found in the bush (countryside). Forty women from remote, rural Aboriginal communities, including students of the Early Childhood Course and some of their tutors, attended. The event was photographed and video recorded for future use. Michele Wilsher can be contacted at PO Batchelor, Batchelor NT 0845, Australia: Tel: +61 84 397 111; Fax: +61 89 397 100.

El Salvador: following up young alumni

Children who have benefited from an early childhood programme may have continuing needs for support when they pass into the school system. For example, they may need creative after school activities to complement the new activities that they encounter in primary school. The 'Children of Street Vendors' project has therefore begun a Saturday programme for children who have passed through the project's centres. The programme includes support for them as they do their homework; gives them opportunities for sustaining and developing new social contacts; and gives a break to those who might otherwise spend their after school time working on the streets alongside their mothers. It also allows the project to see what happens to children after they have been through an early childhood development programme thus providing important information about such areas as project content, especially in terms of transition to primary school.

το πολύχρωμο σχολείο
ΜΙΑ ΕΜΠΕΙΡΙΑ ΔΙΑΠΟΛΙΤΙΣΜΙΚΗΣ ΕΚΠΑΙΔΕΥΣΗΣ ΜΕΣΑ ΑΠΟ ΤΗΝ ΤΕΧΝΗ
«Σχεδία»
Bernard van Leer
Αθηνών

Greece: an intercultural dimension in educational practice

The 'Schedia' Centre of Artistic and Educational Training has published *The multicoloured school: an experience of intercultural education through art* with the help of grants from the University of Athens and the Foundation. Schedia is a non-profit organisation that propagates progressive concepts of education through theatre, music, crafts and artistic experiments. For many years it has produced a range of publications about its innovative activities. This bi-lingual (Greek and English) book is mainly addressed to teachers and describes and documents experiences about applying its innovative educational methodologies in a public elementary school in Athens that is attended by both Muslim and Christian children. The book focuses on a non-traditional approach to socially and culturally derived problems that some children have in participating and learning, and in relating to each other. However, it also serves as an introduction to integrating children into school, irrespective of their social characteristics, cultural background, gender, and individual traits. Overall, the book shows how recognising and using differences positively can curb social factors that lead children to fail in school. The Foundation can provide single copies of the book free of charge. Please write to the address on the back cover.

Guatemala: preserving and building on an oral culture

The *Niños Indígenas Desplazados* (Displaced indigenous children) project of *Niños refugiados del Mundo* (Refugee children of the world) has published a work pack that is drawn from the pre-Hispanic oral culture of the indigenous people of the Quiché region of north west Guatemala. The pack – which is called *Morral de cuentos* (A sackful of stories) – is centred on a collection of traditional indigenous stories that have been rescued from what has been a dying oral tradition. *Morral de cuentos* contains an introduction to the Mayan people and several papers that discuss the relevance of the collected material for work with children. Two separate guides explain how to use the material. The first offers a suggested 'lesson plan' for each of the stories; while the second explains a wide variety of techniques for presenting the stories and developing work from them. The book of stories itself is extensively illustrated and is complemented by sets of cards that can be held up for discussion, coloured in or used to stimulate a range of creative activities. The organisation can be contacted at *Niños refugiados del Mundo*, 5a Calle 1-08, Zona 3, 01003 Ciudad de Guatemala, Guatemala; Tel: +502 2 25382; Fax: +502 2 301 928.

India: parents pressurising young children

The 'Children on the agenda' project carried out by FORCES-TN (Forum for Crèches and Childcare Services – Tamil Nadu) has recently conducted a media campaign to focus attention on the pressure placed on young children to do well academically. The campaign consistently advocates for the Playway approach to education/development in the early years, an approach that centres on developmentally appropriate play activities. A number of short television 'spots' have been produced in which children were shown carrying an unsupportable burden – for example, cumbersome uniforms, heavy backpacks filled with books, excessive homework, and examinations. An analysis of the effectiveness of the campaign has now been published. Called *Messages that move*, it considers personal responses, and those from particular groups of people: parents; teachers; school managers; children; and the general public.

The campaign seems to have been especially effective in touching parents; and the report notes that for some it was the first time the issue had been raised. The visual presentation seemed to be particularly effective in getting the message across. Several respondents have asked for advice on a number of issues ranging from how to approach teachers, to how to change the system. One key issue that has arisen is the dilemma of parents who, on the one hand know their children are growing up in a competitive environment and see education as a means of upward mobility; yet, on the other, also recognise that it may be damaging to pressurise their children in this way and may create a very negative experience of education for them. It is clear that awareness has been created and that there is a powerful desire for change. People have begun to question the existing system, and there is debate and discussion at the household level – something that is particularly significant because debate is the first step towards change.

FORCES has also produced two complementary videos in Tamil and English that deal with the theme in a longer and more detailed way; and a video in Tamil on the theme using the traditional folk medium *villupattu*.

Jamaica: degree in early childhood education

Foundation support for early childhood education training in Jamaica over many years has been crowned with the formalisation of a Bachelor of Education Degree in early childhood education (ECE). This is a collaboration between the University of the West Indies, the Ministry of Education and a teacher training college. Students complete a normal teacher training course at the training college and then go on to the University for the ECE component. This is the first degree course in ECE to be institutionalised in Jamaica.

Kenya: urban community-based organisations and poverty

Calvin Mgugua Kamgara has now published his report about research into urban community-based organisations (CBOs) in the Mathare Valley area of Nairobi. The area has a population of about 150,000, making it one of the largest slums in Kenya. The research – which was supported by Mathare 4A Development Programme and the Foundation – focused on understanding and strengthening the strategies that CBOs have for coping with poverty. It looked particularly at the pressure that is put on urban CBOs to respond to needs and problems, considered how they were able to organise and identify local opportunities to take appropriate action, and examined the consequences of these activities for their well being. The report shows that most CBOs aim to support individual community members in pooling resources for purposes of mutual support; and are a means to ensure that social, educational and spiritual needs are met. Anti poverty strategies include small-scale income generating activities; while many CBOs are also involved in social activities such as traditional dancing, theatre, visiting the sick, school support work and gospel outreach. However, the report points out that the activities of CBOs change over time and are now being influenced by the demands of economic survival – both for themselves and their members. Looking to the future, it contains a number of suggestions. These include: creating alliances and networking with other CBOs; developing credit unions; diversifying income generating activities; and identifying and tapping into government resources.

Europe: an anti-bias training approach in the early years

Anke van Keulen

The author is a member of MUTANT, a bureau for quality in method and management, Utrecht, the Netherlands that provides intercultural training and materials. She had the job of helping to coordinate an international seminar, hosted by the Foundation, that explored the practical ramifications of establishing Europe wide anti-bias principles in the training of those who work with young children, and in the curricula that are employed. It was funded by the European Cultural Foundation, the Dutch Ministry of Health and Welfare, and the Foundation.

A group of European trainers and teachers participated in a workshop of experts in May 1996 in The Hague to identify and highlight basic principles and issues for an anti-bias training approach for working with young children.

The participants were childcare professionals from the United Kingdom, Ireland, Belgium, Denmark, Greece, Portugal, France and the Netherlands. Louise Derman-Sparks, author of the book *Anti-Bias Curriculum: tools for empowering young children,* contributed to the meeting by sharing USA derived anti-bias principles and an early years curriculum, and by setting the context for discussion.

How did this workshop come about?

A European seminar held in Leeds (UK) in October 1992 and organised by the European Childcare Network, focused on the various ways European countries were tackling racism and diversity in their childcare and education provision and training.

Representatives from the Early Years Trainers Anti-Racist Network (EYTARN), which provides anti-racist training and produces a range of publications in the UK, subsequently worked with a representative from MUTANT to follow up one of the recommendations from the Leeds seminar:

> that the curriculum for training of students and for people working directly and indirectly with children, must be based on equal opportunity principles. The curriculum for all children, in all services, must be similarly structured.

The outcome is the project 'An anti-discriminatory/intercultural/diversity training approach in the early years'. Its aims include identifying and the basic principles and issues for all training material for students and staff working with young children, and setting draft guidelines for the issues and principles to be included.

The project has four elements that include a survey of relevant projects, models and materials in the countries of the European Union (begun at the meeting of experts). It will culminate in a conference of professionals to receive the draft guidelines and information about relevant projects.

BOLETIM

PROJECTO HULENE

Micro-acções

MOÍNHO DE VENTO EM REPARAÇÃO

Latrinas Melhoradas na Escolinha do Q. 30

Mais uma escolinha

Mais um Jardim Infantil entra em funcionamento

Nº 4
Maio de 1996

Propriedade e Edição do SASCM Projecto Hulene

Mozambique: bulletin from Hulene project

The fourth edition of the SASCM *Boletim* (the information bulletin of the Hulene project) was published in May and includes articles that describe both the Hulene project's activities and its plan for action during the coming year. The project works with displaced families – many of whom are destitute and unskilled migrants – in the Hulene district of Maputo. Despite the considerable social order problems that still beset the work of the project, the report records the development of community-based schools for 1,130 children 2-5 years; the operation of a community schools festival; the training of over 120 new animators; and the launching of the SASCM *Boletim* as a quarterly that will not only share information but will also serve as an advocacy tool.

Namibia: Erongo's newsletter

The tenth issue of the Erongo pro-child initiative project was published in August. It includes a report on a recent workshop on 'Child abuse: awareness and prevention' run by two facilitators from RAPCAN (Resources Aimed at the Prevention of Child Abuse and Neglect), Cape Town who were sponsored by UNICEF. As a result of the workshop, an awareness campaign is now being developed in several communities by a travelling team from Karibib, Usakos, Tubusis and Okombahe. The newsletter also features the latest developments in the Home Visitors Programme that operates in the town of Mondesa. This has been operating since 1 July, with one home visitor spending one and a half hours per day, for three days a week in each house in the programme; and there is a 'Play for all' each week in a caravan. This currently caters for 80 children, many of whom have never had the chance to play creatively before. The Home Visitors Programme is now expanding to take in the town of Jabulani. ┘

Anti-bias education goals

The anti-bias curriculum for children in their early years described by Louise Derman-Sparks is based on four goals and these will be the main goals in the European draft guidelines. Louise Derman-Sparks explained the way adults can influence children's thinking, feelings and behaviour and so help to empower them to resist the negative impact of bias and racism on their development.

The anti-bias goals are set out below. One set applies to children and one to adults. Although they may have universal application, specific issues and the tasks necessary for working towards these goals will vary depending on cultural backgrounds, age and life experiences.

The goals for children and adults interact with each other, and their combined intent is to empower children to resist the negative impact of bias and racism on their development and to grow into adults who will want and be able to work with others to eliminate all forms of oppression.

For children, the goals include: nurturing their construction of a knowledgeable, confident self-concept and group identity; promoting their empathic interaction with people from diverse backgrounds; fostering their critical thinking about bias; and cultivating their ability to stand up for themselves and others against bias.

Anti-bias goals for adults

The main principle in implementing an anti-bias approach is that the adults who work with children must undertake anti-bias work for themselves. The goals of this are to ensure that workers are self aware and conscious of their own culture, know how to learn about culturally distinct child rearing beliefs of families, how to support dual language development, and how to resolve conflicts between families and/or workers from cultural backgrounds other than their own; become critical thinkers about bias and discrimination in their work, and in early care and education policies and programmes in general; and know how to engage people in dialogue around issues of bias and discrimination.

The guidelines

The guidelines will be based on the conclusions and recommendations from the meeting of experts and on relevant literature and project experiences. Professionals in each country will be able to adapt these guidelines to fit their own situation. The aims of the guidelines are:

1 to ensure implementation of anti-bias practices for all early years training and service provision;

2 to enable trainers to inform themselves about anti-bias practices;

3 to provide support for students and professionals in early years work;

4 to ensure that all early years training is embedded in anti-bias principles; and

5 to establish a common approach in early years training in the countries of the European Union.

The guidelines will be published and translated at the end of 1996.

notes

1 Louise Derman-Sparks and the ABC Task Force *Anti-Bias Curriculum: Tools for empowering young children* (1989) National Association for Education for Young Children, 1509 16th St., 20036-1426 Washington DC, USA. Tel +1 202 232 8777. Fax +1 202 328 1846.

2 European Commission Network on Childcare: *Challenging racism in European childcare provision: the report of a seminar held in Leeds, UK, in 1992.*

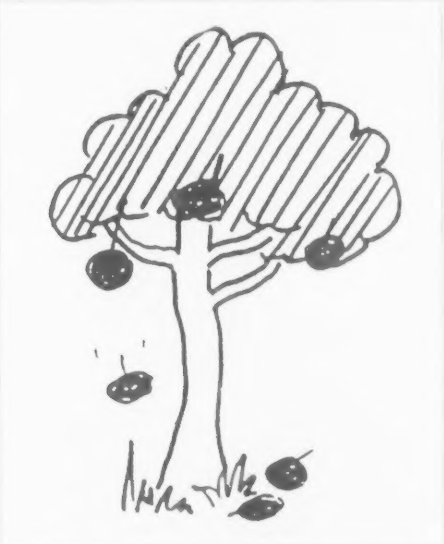
Australia: participatory learning in Aboriginal pre-school teacher training

This presentation gives an idea of what can happen when students are encouraged and enabled to learn in a participative way, and to contribute to the content of a course as bearers of their cultures and traditions.

It is drawn from a report produced by participants in the 'Associate Diploma of Education' course that is operated by Batchelor College in the Northern Territories of Australia. The course is for people from remote Aboriginal communities who want to work with young children in their own communities in ways that rescue, revalidate and preserve traditional Aboriginal customs. However, underlying this is a recognition of the need for a bicultural approach to development, one that respects both the Aboriginal cultures, and those of non-native Australians.

The report concerns a workshop in 1996 about two stages in the first year of the course: Stage two – Problem solving and expressive arts; and Stage three – Maths 1 and the expressive arts. It contains examples of students' work around the themes that they worked with. Many of the students used childhood experiences including elements of Aboriginal tradition, as well as memories of particular cultural attitudes, and ways of behaving, perceiving, reacting and so on. Mingling with these are influences from outside. One instance of this is the inclusion of a brief survey of the worldwide history of mathematics; a second is a quotation from a drama expert on the importance of giving children the freedom to experience drama.

The Foundation can supply photocopies of the report: please write to the address on the back cover.



Goannas[1] and maths

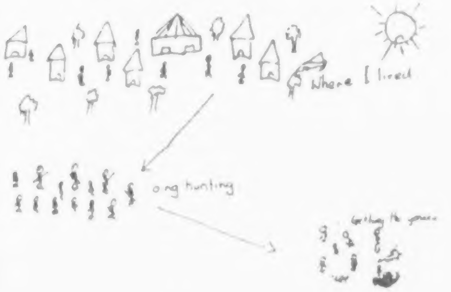
When I was only five or six I lived with my family at Alexandria Station on the Berkley River. I used to go hunting with the old women. We had to take a billycan[2] each with water. I remember it was the same time of day every day, in the late afternoon.

The old women used to carry a piece of steel bar to knock the goanna on the head but not kill it. They also broke the goannas legs so they wouldn't run away. I would carry the eggs in my billycan and the women would carry the goanna over their shoulder. When we got home we would make a big fire in a hole. The women would cut open the goanna's stomach and pull out its intestines. Then they would cook the liver and kidney for us to eat, then cook the meat in a hole in the ground.

After it was cooked I would help to pull it out of the hole. It was the women who broke it up into pieces and shared it with everyone. After you had eaten you would have to have a shower to try to wash the smell off you. But it was good eating and tasted yummy.

Some maths ideas in my story

- How big a billycan and how much water do you need?
- The sun told me the time?
- How many eggs would fit in the billycan?
- How big were the goannas?
- How hot would you have the fire
- How long would it take to cook the goanna?
- How many pieces would you need to share with everyone?



(Doris Johnson)

---

[1] an egg laying reptile

[2] a small container used for carrying/cooking food

My grandmother

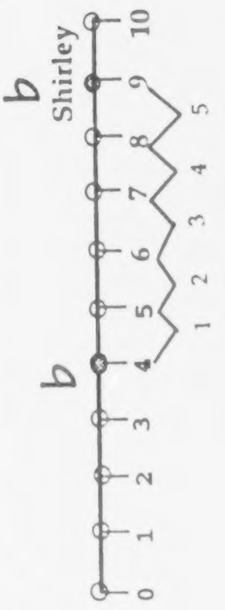
When I was five years old, my two sisters and I were sitting around the campfire with my grandmother. She was teaching us about our own Garwa language but I couldn't understand how she spoke it. Still today I can only understand it. I always think back for my grandmother now that she has passed away a long time ago.

She also told us stories about how her ten children and my grandfather walked from Calvet Hill to Woologrange and Redbank Mine and Robinson River to meet families. They stayed at one place and then moved on to another. The walk took a long time: from Calvet Hill to Robinson River would take them a few weeks.

Some maths ideas in my story

- Language and maths, they go together.
- Which way to walk?
- How many days walking?
- Which direction to take?

(Susan George)



The importance of art

The importance of art to me is that you shape your artwork so other people can understand it easily. Sometimes it's the way you feel that is expressed in it too, by being creative. In Aboriginal culture, it is also important for the person to know its symbols and meanings – so other people will understand the knowledge in it also.

(Mavis Jumbiri)

Art is important to me because it helps me to learn and understand about my culture. Art is expressed strongly in sculptures and drawings and dancing among the Aborigines of the Torres Straits Islands. I think it is important for early childhood students to know about the different ways that art can be expressed. When learning through the arts, we should remember that it is student centred: they know that there is significant personal meaning in everything they do.

(Stephanie Bulsey)

Children need to learn more about art when they are small. They need to understand the older people telling stories about the land and about the Dreaming* that they belong to. They need the old people coming to school. Children are taught how to dance within the ceremonies. Expressive arts are important: they help us to understand traditional ways and this gives us more ideas about ourselves.

(Alice Nelson)

* An Aboriginal concept of [illegible] their own special place within it and their identity within the past, present and future.

Games from the local environment

Catch a crocodile:

- music– make quiet and loud crocodile music using sticks, drums and shakers;
- drama – be the crocodile, be the crocodile catcher;
- dance – learn a crocodile dance, tie children together and dance in a line;
- media – tell stories about catching pretend crocodiles;
- visual art – make a big crocodile with boxes and paint.

(Mavis Bangguna)

Birds

- music – sing a song about birds that the children know in their first language;
- drama – talk about birds around the community, ask a child to imitate the movement of a bird, get other children to guess it;
- dance – ask the children how a certain bird dances, practice and perform these at different speeds;
- media – record the different bird noises around the community;
- visual art – draw a large bird and decorate it with collage, print bird track patterns.

(Mavis Jumbiri)

Martian maths and problem solving

We used interlocking cubes in three different colours. Each colour was a flavour of ice cream. We had to see how many different ice cream combinations we could make. I learned that you have to understand the activity properly before you try to solve the problem.

(Diedre Knapp)

- Some useful ideas to build on
- Try different ways of solving a problem.
- Problems make you think.
- Sometimes I only guess.
- Makes you read the story a few times to make sure you understand it.
- After I had solved the problems, I felt good.

(Doris Johnson)

Malaysia: a year long training project

This article is based on the *End of the project report of the capacity building training in early childhood and childcare development in Malaysia*. The report was produced by the Management Institute for Social Change in Malaysia

In February 1994 a one-year project called Partnership for building skills was set up. It was aimed at further improving the early childhood development (ECD) and organisational knowledge and skills of the Foundation's partners in Malaysia (see box) and members of other organisations. To do this, the project drew on the expertise of three NGOs that specialise in capacity-building: the Management Institute for Social Change (MINSOC) in Malaysia; Participatory Research in Asia (PRIA) from India; and the Centre for Health Education and Nutrition Awareness (CHETNA) also from India.

The Projects

Childhood friends – *Persatuan Sahabat Wanita Selangor* (Friends of women)
works with children and their mothers in squatter areas in and around the capital city; provides services such as a library, publications, and training; and runs centres in three squatter areas for the children and mothers.

Child's play – Partners of Community Organisations
works with families in rural areas in the state of Sabah in East Malaysia; investigates the current educational status among indigenous children in rural areas; plans to develop an indigenous-based education programme for rural children.

Growing up strong – Pre-School Teachers Association of Northern Malaysia
is a network of child care centres located in rural areas and plantations of northern Malaysia; works to make pre-school facilities available to families in rural areas and plantations, and to improve their quality; improves the teaching skills of pre-school teachers; and develops and upgrades teaching materials and resources for child development.

Partnership for building skills – Management Institute for Social Change
is a one year training project that works to create the conditions that will enable local organisations to improve the quality of their ECD programmes and strengthen their organisational skills.

above: local materials and traditional skills provide opportunities for fun and learning
Alternative Child Care Project (Malaysia)

The capacity building exercises were designed to provide the participants with skills that could be maintained and used to build the skills of their own colleagues and others. The exercises focused on the practical issues that arise in the NGOs' daily work. These included: improving skills in ECD; management; programme planning; community participation; monitoring; local resource mobilisation; and evaluation. One phase of the initiative entailed each project partner developing an appropriate training module and learning resources for wider dissemination in their respective localities.

The training project took the form of six workshops spread over the year. The first lasted two days and identified and assessed the participants' needs. From it emerged a framework to guide the training of trainers phase that followed.

The second workshop consisted of seven days of intensive training of trainers. From this emerged a draft curriculum, sample lesson plans and the development of a training module for the training of community members and colleagues in ECD programmes.

With the resultant range of training skills, the participants put these skills into action in the third workshop by training their colleagues in service. They then documented and shared their experiences.

The fourth workshop, a five day training course in documentation and management, followed. Part of this looked at documenting the processes which each organisation had undergone.

With the end of the year approaching, the fifth workshop was devoted to carrying out a participatory evaluation using two external evaluators and one internal evaluator from a participating programme. Trainers and participants evaluated change in the organisations involved in the process.

Finally, the sixth and last workshop saw the participants and trainers meeting for three days to discuss the evaluation report, to consider the overall process, and to plan follow-up strategies and action.

The outcomes of the experience indicate both formal and non-formal benefits. For example, the skills of the participants had been enhanced in important areas such as curriculum development, teaching and facilitation skills and resource mobilisation giving them more possibilities for meeting their future needs over time. Confidence had also been bolstered.

On another level, the project has led to an informal network of ECD practitioners which should be a useful resource to the participants in the future. The network will also prepare the ground for information sharing and support among the participating organisations which will hopefully create a common platform *vis-à-vis* government and the private sector in the longer term. In this way it serves as a sounding board for new ideas and a way of collectively analysing individual situations in relation to wider social and economic trends. In the summing up of the training project's evaluations by each participant, it was said that the capacity building programme exceeded expectations and that it had 'given birth to a new network opening up space, opportunity and a mechanism ... to help create a community with a child-centred social responsibility'. ┘

Zambia: the environment, mess and the joys of recycled and natural play materials

Mrs Bernadette Luwaile Mwamba

The author works with the Salvation Army Preschool in Lusaka, Zambia. In this article she sets out some ideas that stem from a concern for the environment, reminds us of the great value of 'messy' play and shows how natural, discarded and second hand materials make better playthings than expensive shop-bought toys.

When did your children last make a mud pie or race sticks in a nearby stream? For generations children have played with sand, water, soil, mud, clay, stones, sticks, twigs, corn husks, nuts, fruit, leaves and flowers.

But today, shop-bought toys predominate. Yet it is more important than ever for our children to value the Earth's resources. If we can foster their awareness from their earliest days, their future will be more secure. To occupy, amuse and educate young children it isn't necessary to buy expensive toys – an important consideration in these difficult times. Masses of cheap play materials are readily available if you have a bit of imagination, a lot of patience and the readiness to allow children to play 'messily'.

Coping with messiness

I've never been known for the tidiness of my house and was quite prepared to become involved in all sorts of activities with my own and my neighbour's children. Talking about this one day, another mum said plaintively that she became very distressed if her house was a mess, yet she desperately wanted her children to have the opportunities my children had.

Eventually we came up with the solution of reserving a section of the working surface in her kitchen exclusively for her children. They could sit there and glue, cut and paint, later displaying their art work on the wall behind. That mum felt she could cope with the mess if it was contained in one place.

Learning and recycling

In this seemingly expendable world, it is important that our children learn to reuse material – to recycle, not be wasteful and not always expect to buy new. With the masses of junk mail available, there are ample sheets of paper, envelopes for storage and pictures for cutting and collage.

While adults should be campaigning against the over use of packaging, children can meanwhile get full value from these waste products. Save boxes for making models and encourage interest in food by setting up a shop from empty packages and recycled paper bags, using foil milk bottle tops for money.

Seek out other useful materials and items that are available at little cost, and toys that are out grown rather than worn out... this also saves more of the earth's valuable resources on making new ones. But also encourage children to make their own books, using drawings and magazine cuttings to illustrate their own life style. Use this to raise their awareness of God's world and the part we, as families can play.

The wider use of play

Use play opportunities to discuss with children where food comes from, the need to eat a variety of foods, and how people from different backgrounds eat foods that are less familiar to us. Old kitchen equipment can also be used for playing at housekeeping; and can also shape and model clay, playdough and sand.

Shop-bought outfits with which children dress up as a nurse, a cowboy or Batman, have restricted value and are not necessary. Far better are the creative dressing up possibilities that come from old clothes, curtains and other scrap materials – perhaps found in 'jumble sales' (community sales of second hand items). And, if you can get hold of long lengths of lightweight cloth, exciting garments and even playhouses and tents can be made.

Growing things is an excellent way of introducing a child to our wonderful world. A large plastic pot can serve as a miniature garden if the real thing is not available. Let children be responsible for it themselves. Grow robust plants that give quick results because young children's attention spans can be very short. Try grass seeds sown in the shape of their initials, lettuce and radish for later enjoyment, flowering bulbs and hardy annual seedlings.

What is especially exciting is that, while having a serious message, environmental play is fun too. So, on the next sunny day, head for your nearest stream and, after having the satisfaction of mud oozing through your fingers, drop sticks into the water and see who wins the race! ┘

New publications from the Foundation

18

Informes de Trabajo sobre el
Desarrollo de la Primera Infancia

los niños
para fortalecer el
espíritu humano

19

Working Papers in
Early Childhood Development

to change
an analysis of changes in
parental attitudes
in East Jerusalem

Guía de promoción de la resiliencia en los niños para fortalecer el espíritu humano

Edith Grotberg

La *Guía de promoción de la resiliencia en los niños para fortalecer el espíritu humano* es una versión castellana de *A guide to promoting resilience in children: strengthening the human spirit* ('Early Childhood Development: Practice and Reflections' series number 8) publicada por la Fundación en 1995.

Se trata de la capacidad humana que permite a personas, grupos o comunidades prevenir, reducir o superar los efectos negativos de la adversidad. La guía utilize resultados del 'Proyecto internacional sobre Resiliencia' (un proyecto que contó con la participación de 14 países) — resultados que demuestran que pocos padres de familia están promoviendo la resiliencia en sus propios niños. La guía ofrece técnicas e ideas sobre cómo promover la resiliencia.

Guía de promoción de la resiliencia en los niños para fortalecer el espíritu humano, Informes de Trabajo sobre el Desarrollo de la Primera Infancia número 18; Dra Edith Grotberg, traducido por el Dr Nestor Suárez Ojeda; ISBN 90-6195-044-9

Empowering parents to change the future: an analysis of changes to parental attitudes in East Jerusalem

Nabil Shibly with Riad Tibi

(The Trust of Programmes for Early Childhood, Family and Community Education)

Empowering parents to change the future is a shortened version of a report about research into the impact of programmes for families with young children that was carried out in two neighbourhoods of Jerusalem. The programmes were for the Palestinian population; and were based at the Spafford Community Centre and operated by the Trust of Programmes for Early Childhood, Family and Community Education.

This paper — number 19 in the Foundation's 'Working Papers in ECD' series — provides a highly detailed view of the situation that families find themselves in, and shows how the programmes responded to these. It then goes on to analyse the effectiveness of the programmes and to draw out lessons for the future.

Empowering parents to change the future: an analysis of changes to parental attitudes in East Jerusalem; Nabil Shibly with Riad Tibi; ISBN 90-6195-045-7

These two new publications — and *A guide to promoting resilience in children: strengthening the human spirit*, the original English version of the *Guía de promoción de la resiliencia en los niños para fortalecer el espíritu humano* — are available free of charge in single copies from the Foundation at the address on the back cover. A full publications list is also available.

Resources

Publications from Spare

Please note that the Spare Newsletter is published by the Society for the Protection of the Rights of the Child and not as listed in our last issue. We apologise for the error. The society has also published the following booklets: *The magic a mother can do* (on breastfeeding); Child sexual abuse; and a synopsis of the International Code of the marketing of the Breastmilk Substitutes. The society can be contacted on its new fax number (+92 51 279 256) or at PO box 301, F8, Islamabad, Pakistan.

FOOD AND NUTRITION
A Module for Training of Early Childhood Education Teachers and Caregivers
Regional Training and Resource Centre
NAIROBI
February 1996

Food and nutrition: a module for training of early childhood education teachers and caregivers

This is one module of a series of seven that has been produced for training purposes. It gives basic information on food and nutrition and how best the food can be utilised to improve the survival chances and development of children; and is the result of a collaboration by writers from Lesotho, Kenya, Nigeria and South Africa. Among many other aims, it sets out to help trainers appreciate the importance and utility of locally available foods, to guide caregivers and the community on proper utilisation and preparation of food, to help them acquire skills, to help them apply relevant knowledge on food preservation and to help them advise communities on how to increase food production.

Other modules in the same series cover child development, child health, early childhood resource centres, the management of early childhood programmes, the supervision of services for children, and weaning foods. All are well illustrated and highly practical being drawn from direct experience over many years in the kinds of settings they are designed to be used in.

Food and nutrition: a module for training of early childhood education teachers and caregivers; (1996); published by the Regional Training and Resource Centre, Kenya Institute of Education, PO Box 30231, Nairobi, Kenya; Tel: +254 2 749 9009; Fax: +254 2 746 973

مدخل إلى التقييم

Introducing evaluation in Arabic

Introducing evaluation by Willem van der Eyken – published by the Foundation in English, Spanish and Portuguese – is now available in Arabic following extensive development and testing. The translation and adaption was carried out by the Arab Resource Collective (ARC). Copies are available from ARC, PO box 7380, Nicosia, Cyprus; Fax: +357 2 476 790. Copies of the English, Spanish and Portuguese version are available from the Bernard van Leer Foundation at the address on the back page. Copies of a Hebrew version are available from Hamutal Delima, Shatil, PO Box 53395, Jerusalem 91533, Israel; Fax: +972 2 735 149.

Learning from innovation

The Mina Swaminathan Research Foundation, Madras, and the National Institute of Public Cooperation and Child Development, New Delhi, have produced their report of a consultation on innovative approaches in early childhood care and education (ECCE) that they jointly organised in December 1995. The consultation was funded by the Aga Khan Foundation (India) and UNICEF; and drew on an extensive documentation of voluntary sector implementation of child care programmes that has been carried out since 1993 by Project ACCESS of the Mina Swaminathan Research Foundation. The consultation had three objectives: to draw the attention of policy makers to multiple approaches in ECCE; to critically analyse issues related to the development of childcare services; and to make recommendations about how insights from these experiences can be incorporated into childcare programmes.

Learning
From
Innovations
Report of a consultation on innovative approaches in early childhood care and education

The report offers the insights that emerged from Project ACCESS's documentation; and also outlines the discussions in the consultation of the issues that emerged. Among others, these included: replicability and sustainability; flexibility and responsiveness; cost effectiveness, quality and relevance; participatory training approaches; and decentralisation and the involvement of local self-governing organisations. It concludes with the outcomes of the consultation set out in the form of a series of recommendations grouped under three headings: Quality and Evaluating Effectiveness; Human Resource Development (training and motivation); and Sustainability and Replicability.

Learning from innovation, (1996), published by the Mina Swaminathan Research Foundation, Third Cross Road, Taramani Industrial Area, Madras 600 113, India;
Tel: +91 44 235 1229; Fax:+91 44 235 1319,
email:
mssrf.madras@sm8.sprintrpg.sprint.com **or**
MDSAAA51@giasmd01.vanl.net.in

96

continued on page 24

Bernard van Leer
Foundation
Newsletter
Number 84 October 1996

Text from the *Newsletter* may be reproduced or adapted without the publisher's permission, provided it is not distributed for profit and with attribution to the Bernard van Leer Foundation. Unless otherwise stated, all photographs are by courtesy of the project concerned

ISSN 0921-5840

Bernard van Leer Foundation
PO Box 82334
2508 EH The Hague
The Netherlands
Tel: (070) 351 2040
Telefax: (070) 350 2373

About the Foundation

The Bernard van Leer Foundation is an international, philanthropic and professional institution based in The Netherlands. The Foundation's income is derived from the Van Leer Group Foundation, the majority shareholder of Royal Packaging Industries van Leer. Created in 1949 for broad humanitarian purposes, the Bernard van Leer Foundation concentrates on the development of low-cost, community-based initiatives in early childhood care and education for socially and culturally disadvantaged children from birth to eight years of age.

The Foundation provides financial support and professional guidance to governmental, academic and voluntary bodies setting up projects to enable disadvantaged children to benefit fully from educational and social development opportunities. The Foundation currently supports approximately 130 major projects in some 40 developing and industrialised countries. The dissemination, adaptation and replication of successful project outcomes are crucial to the Foundation's work.

Grants are not made to individuals nor for general support to organisations. The Foundation does not provide study, research or travel grants. No grants are made in response to general appeals. In accordance with its statutes, the Foundation gives preference to countries in which the Van Leer Group of Companies is established.

Administration

Trustees: Chairman: I. Samrén (Sweden); Mrs M.C. Benton (USA); W.H. Brouwer (Netherlands); W.W. Cross (USA); R. Freudenberg (Germany); J. Kremers (Netherlands); H.B. van Liemt (Netherlands); A. Mar-Haim (Israel); P.J.J. Rich (France)

Executive Director: M.C.E. van Gendt

from page 23

The self-help action plan for education (SHAPE) in Zambia: of copper and fire

This is the tenth booklet in UNESCO's 'Education for all: making it work' series which promotes and analyses successful basic education projects in developing countries. It traces the history and ongoing results of the SHAPE project for all primary schools in Zambia that aimed at empowerment for communities and teachers. It was based on the ideas of dialogue, freedom, progress, initiative, education with production, self-sufficiency, school autonomy and active teacher training. Such was its success that it evolved into a management system for education.

The self-help action plan for education (SHAPE) in Zambia: of copper and fire; Benedict Faccini; 1996; published by UNESCO, Paris, France. ISSN 1020-0800

Children in Charge : The child's right to a fair hearing and *Children in our charge: The child's right to resources*

These are two collections of essays about children's rights that draw on experiences in many countries. The first deals with children's rights and international law; cross-national research about the perspectives of children and their teachers; traveller children; adults as allies; the children's parliament in Slovenia; what happens to children when their parents separate; the right to play; empowerment and autonomy from babyhood in Peru; paradoxes of socialisation; children teaching adults to listen to them; listening to the street-children of Mwanza; and so on.

The second includes themes such as: in whose best interest; children's welfare rights; a lawyer's view of children's rights; world changes and social policies in Uruguay; the rights of the child in a post totalitarian country; the role of the Child Welfare Society of Kenya; creating an adaptable science curriculum in rural Africa; educational rights of institutionalised children in Romania; consulting children over curriculum content and play; new reproductive technologies; minors on the run; and power relationships.

Children in Charge : The child's right to a fair hearing (ISBN 1-85302-118-0); and *Children in our charge: The child's right to resources*; (ISBN 1-853021180); John, Mary (Ed); 1996; published by Jessica Kingsley, London, UK